Men-at-Arms

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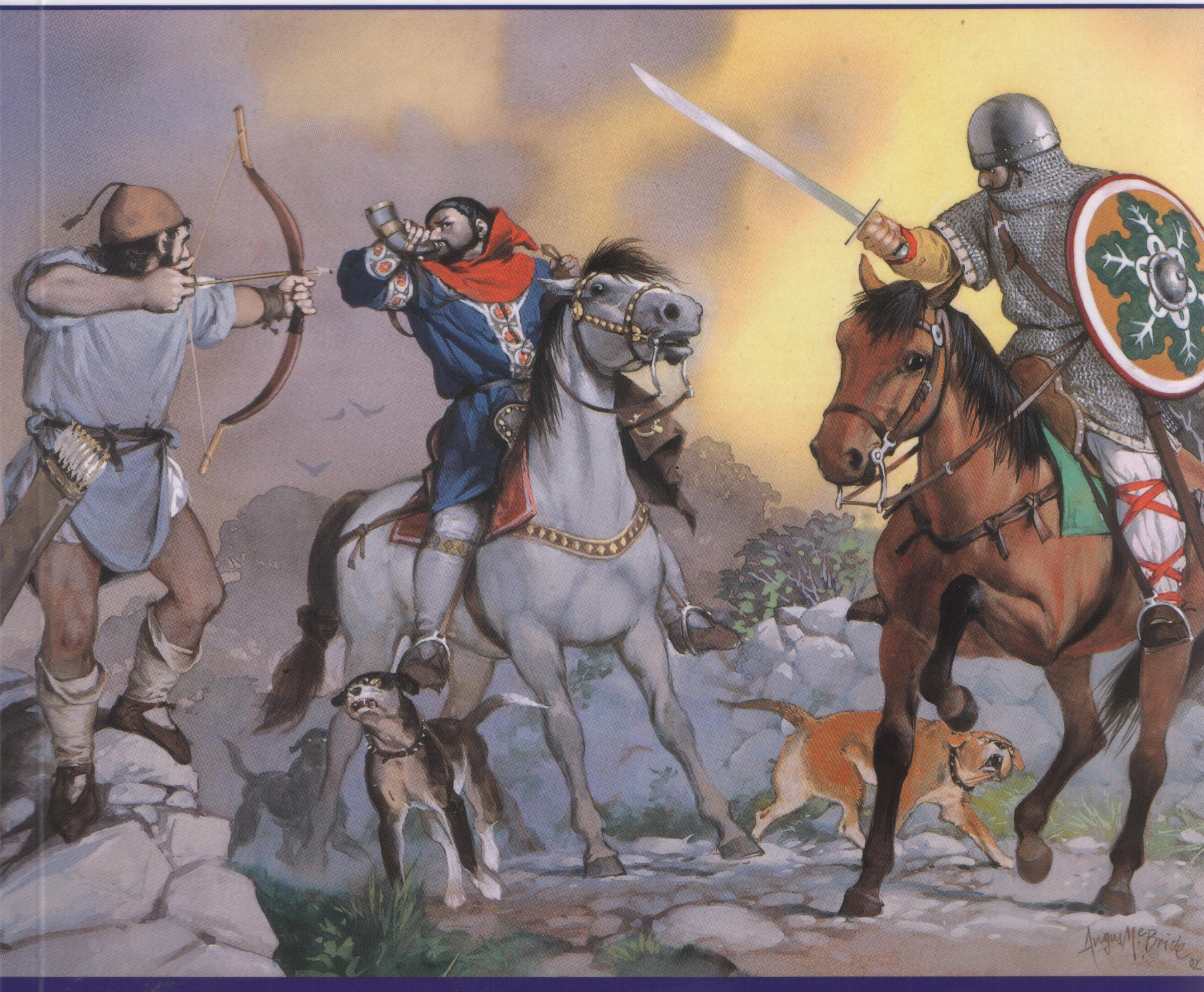
Italian Medieval Armies 1000–1300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Dedication

For Laura, the Latest Edition

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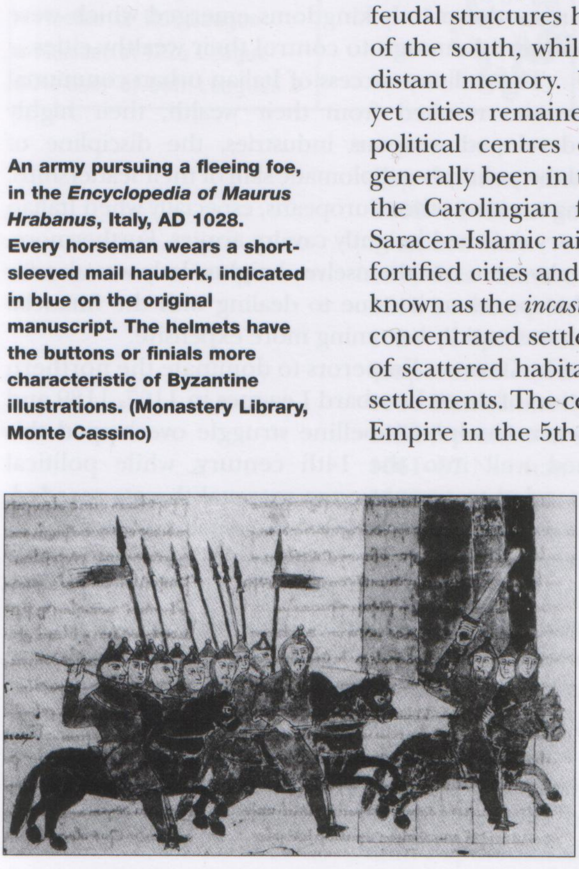
ITALIAN MEDIEVAL ARMIES AD 1000–1300

INTRODUCTION

DIVERSITY, REGIONAL VARIATIONS AND LOCAL LOYALTIES were characteristic of medieval Italy, with rivalry between the wealthy cities stemming from a desire to control trade routes on land and sea. In the 11th century increasingly assertive cities struggled to free themselves from domination by regional barons. In the 12th and 13th centuries these cities, now sometimes supported by the feudal aristocracy, fought to free themselves from domination by the German Emperor who was, theoretically, the ruler of most of Italy. Meanwhile rivalry between Pope and Emperor was exploited by cities and feudal lords to further their own interests. Hence some cities and aristocratic families came to see themselves as traditionally Guelph – that is, supporters of the Papal cause; while identifying themselves as staunchly Ghibelline – supporters of the Imperial cause.

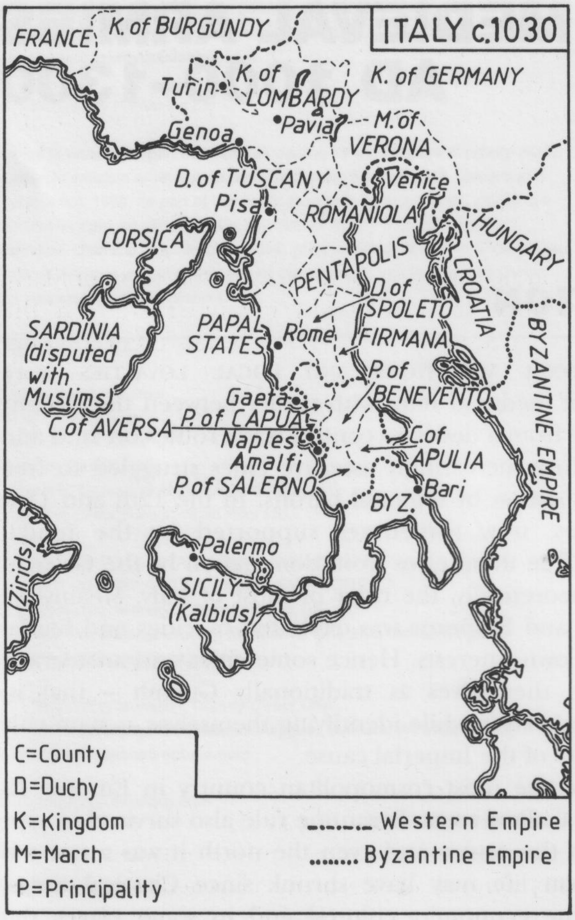
While Italy became the most cosmopolitan country in Europe, its feudal structures had shallow roots. Byzantine rule also survived in part of the south, while in the centre and even the north it was a not too distant memory. Urban life may have shrunk since Classical times, yet cities remained the economic, cultural and in some places the political centres of Italy. In Carolingian times local authority had generally been in the hands of 'counts' – one per city or diocese. When the Carolingian feudal levies failed against Magyar-Hungarian and Saracen-Islamic raiding in the 9th and 10th centuries, Italy fell back upon fortified cities and castles for defence. This period saw what came to be known as the *incastallemento,* a process which involved the creation of new concentrated settlements, often called *castella,* to replace the old system of scattered habitation, and also the fortification of both old and new settlements. The centuries from the fall of the western half of the Roman Empire in the 5th century to the 13th century saw the liberation of the Italian peasantry from Roman-type bondage.



An army pursuing a fleeing foe, in the *Encyclopedia of Maurus Hrabanus*, Italy, AD 1028. Every horseman wears a short-sleeved mail hauberk, indicated in blue on the original manuscript. The helmets have the buttons or finials more characteristic of Byzantine illustrations. (Monastery Library, Monte Cassino)

As royal authority fragmented in 10th century northern and central Italy, smaller units emerged as autonomous powers, while the Emperors in Germany largely failed in their attempts to impose Imperial authority. Emperor Otto II similarly failed when he tried to take over the fragmented far south of Italy, his army being crushed by a Muslim force at Cotrone in 982.

In specifically military terms the later 10th century saw the rise of fully armoured cavalrymen or *milites,* who were also evolving into a social elite. As yet urban militias did little more than defend


ITALY c.1030
FRANCE
K. of BURGUNDY
K. of GERMANY
Turin
K. of LOMBARDY
Pavia
M. of VERONA
Genoa
D. of TUSCANY
Venice
Pisa
ROMANIOLA
HUNGARY
CORSICA
PENTAPOLIS
CROATIA
D. of SPOLETO
SARDINIA (disputed with Muslims)
PAPAL STATES
Rome
FIRMANA
BYZANTINE EMPIRE
P. of BENEVENTO
Gaeta
P. of CAPUA
C. of AVERSA
Naples
C. of APULIA
Amalfi
P. of SALERNO
Bari
BYZ.
Palermo
(Zirids)
SICILY (Kalbids)
C=County
D=Duchy
K=Kingdom
M=March
P=Principality
Western Empire
Byzantine Empire

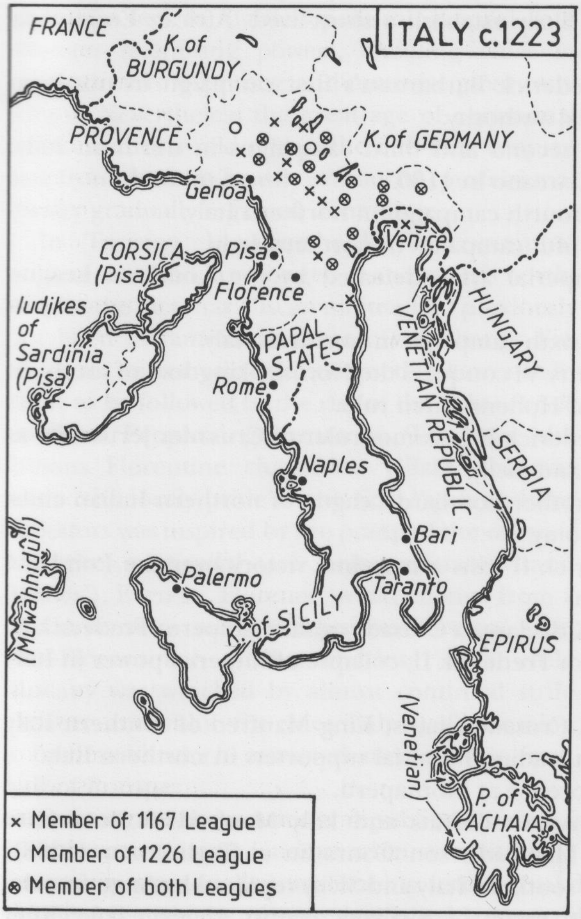
their own town walls, yet most free townsmen were now either *milites* or *cives*, 'citizens' with a military obligation. By 1000 the higher aristocracy controlled few cities, which generally looked to their resident bishop for political leadership. However, in the 11th and 12th centuries most communes were established by their resident patrician or knightly class and were dominated by a resident aristocracy. Such communes usually resulted from a merging of the town assembly or *arengo* with a newer *coniuratio* or 'sworn association' dedicated to upholding its members' interests. At the same time the effectiveness of militia infantry drawn from merchants and artisans gave the latter increasing political influence.

Unfortunately little is known about the earliest days of these urban communes. Some cities had communal officials called *consuls* shortly before 1100. However, most communes were created in the 12th century and then went on to dominate their immediate surroundings or *contado*, at least in the wealthier or more fertile parts of Italy. Elsewhere, mountainous or isolated regions like Piedmont, Liguria and Friuli remained very feudal in social, political and military terms; while in southern Italy kingdoms emerged which were powerful enough to control their wealthy cities.

The military success of Italian urban communal armies resulted from their wealth, their highly developed weapons industries, the discipline of their militia armies, and the political or diplomatic skill of their leaderships. This was deeply shocking to many other Europeans, especially when Italian communal militia infantry defeated knightly cavalry armies. Furthermore, many of the militia cavalry were not themselves knights. Italy was also far ahead of the rest of Europe when it came to dealing with the financial aspect of warfare, which was rapidly becoming more expensive.

Continuing attempts by German Emperors to dominate the northern cities led to the formation of three Lombard Leagues in 1167, 1189 and 1226. The Pope-Emperor, Guelph-Ghibelline struggle overlapped this process and continued well into the 14th century, while political tensions within cities tended to emerge once external threats receded. This in turn led to the *podesta* system in which a respected 'foreign' or outside figure was invited to take control – though his powers were strictly limited and supervised by the city's own consuls.

In the mid-13th century the increasingly influential merchant middle class tried to take over from established consular aristocracies and to establish *popolo* government dominated by the often 'new rich' families which controlled the infantry militias. This experiment rarely lasted very long, and the late 13th century saw the beginnings of yet another change, when many cities abandoned their anarchic semi-democratic structures and allowed themselves to be taken over by the *signoria* who were, in effect, local dictators.


ITALY c.1223
FRANCE
K. of BURGUNDY
PROVENCE
K. of GERMANY
Genoa
Venice
CORSICA (Pisa)
Pisa
Florence
Iudikes of Sardinia (Pisa)
PAPAL STATES
Rome
HUNGARY
VENETIAN REPUBLIC
SERBIA
Naples
Bari
Taranto
Palermo
K. of SICILY
EPIRUS
(Muwahhidūn)
(Venetian)
P. of ACHAIA
× Member of 1167 League
○ Member of 1226 League
⊗ Member of both Leagues

While Italy was becoming ever more fragmented, the Italian maritime republics of Amalfi, Pisa, Genoa and Venice challenged the previous Islamic domination of the Mediterranean Sea and its wealthy trade. Each of these republics was, however, identifiably different. Founded in the 9th century, Amalfi pursued a policy of peaceful co-operation with its Islamic trading partners and had no territorial ambitions within Italy. Similarly, Venice tried to avoid entanglements on the mainland, though its merchant-venturers were quite prepared to fight for a trading advantage at sea. It was Pisa and then Genoa which, in the 11th century, led a general Christian assault across much of the Mediterranean, paving the way for an invasion of the Islamic Middle East by the First Crusade. In Pisa and Genoa *compagna*, 'companies' or associations of shipowners had in fact accumulated enough wealth to finance major naval expeditions themselves. Local lords and rural landowners also invested in these hazardous but potentially lucrative piratical ventures. Meanwhile, to the south, Amalfi's glory days were over.

CHRONOLOGY

962 Otto I of Germany crowned Emperor in Rome, uniting Germany and northern Italy.

982 Emperor Otto II defeated by the Muslims at Cap Colonna; unsuccessful Byzantine invasion of Islamic Sicily.

1009–18 First recorded employment of Norman mercenaries in southern Italy.

1016 Pisa claims domination of Corsica.

1018 Lombard-Norman alliance defeated by the Byzantines at Cannae.

1024 & 1037 Italian nobles unsuccessfully refuse recognition of the Emperor selected in Germany.

1050 Pisa claims domination of Sardinia.

1053 Normans of southern Italy defeat a Papal-German army at Civitate.

1061–87 Norman conquest of Islamic Sicily.

1063 Pisan fleet raids Islamic Sicily.

1071 Normans complete their conquest of Byzantine southern Italy.

1073 Gregory VII becomes Pope; start of the conflict between Papacy and Empire.

1076 Pope Gregory VII forms an alliance with the anti-Imperial Normans of southern Italy.

1081–84 Emperor Henry IV of Germany invades Italy and is crowned Emperor by the 'anti-Pope'; Pope Gregory VII recaptures Rome with Norman support.

1090 Normans conquer Islamic Malta and Gozo.

1135 Pope Innocent III declares a Crusade against the Normans and the 'anti-Pope' Anacletus.

1146–60 Normans of Sicily establish a short-lived 'African Empire' in Tunisia and Libya.

1153–55 Emperor Frederick Barbarossa's first campaign in northern Italy to restore Imperial authority.

1158–64 Barbarossa's second and third campaigns in northern Italy; defeated by Milan at Carcano in 1160.

1167–68 Barbarossa's fourth campaign in northern Italy.

1174–78 Barbarossa's fifth campaign in northern Italy.

1176 Barbarossa's Imperial army defeated by the Lombard League at Legnano.

1183–86 Barbarossa's sixth campaign in northern Italy.

1190–94 Emperor Henry VI conquers the Norman kingdom of southern Italy and Sicily; start of Hohenstaufen rule.

1224–43 Emperor Frederick II becomes ruler of Crusader Jerusalem as well as southern Italy and Sicily.

1226 Formation of another Lombard League of northern Italian cities to defend their autonomy.

1237 Emperor Frederick II wins a marginal victory over the Lombard League at Cortenuova.

1240 Pope Gregory IX declares a Crusade against Emperor Frederick II.

1250 Death of Emperor Frederick II; collapse of Imperial power in Italy and Germany.

1255 Pope declares a Crusade against King Manfred of southern Italy and Sicily, and against leading Imperial supporters in northern Italy.

1260 Siena defeats Florence at Montaperti.

1266–68 Charles of Anjou defeats and kills Manfred at Benevento (1266), and defeats Manfred's son Conradin at Tagliacozzo (1268); Hohenstaufen rule in southern Italy and Sicily replaced by Angevin rule.

1282 'Sicilian Vespers' revolt by Sicilians against Angevin rule; King Peter III of Aragon invited to rule Sicily.

1283 The Pope declares a Crusade against Aragon.

1284 Genoa defeats Pisa at the naval battle of Meloria.

1289 Florence defeats Arezzo at Campaldino.

1299 Angevin naval victory over Aragonese at Cap Orlando.

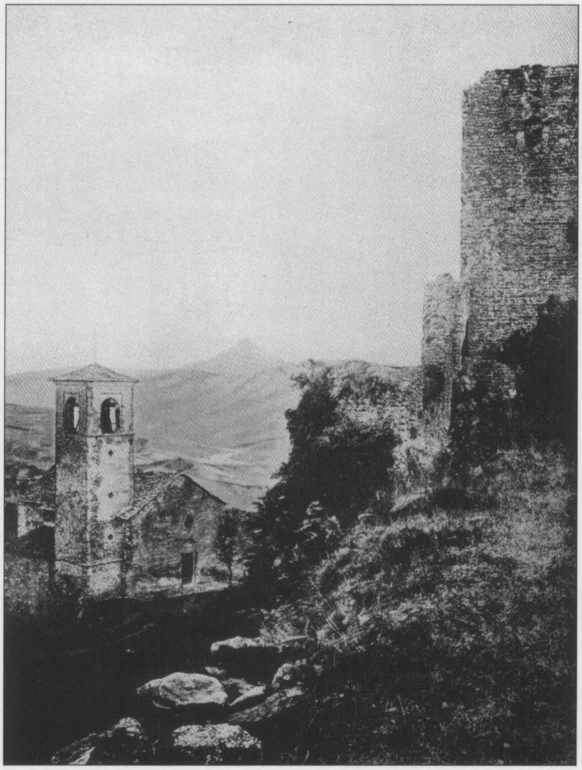
NORTHERN & CENTRAL ITALY

These centuries saw the development of two distinct military systems; the feudal or largely rural armies, raised and led by the old local aristocracies, and the communal or urban forces raised by cities.

The Emperor and lesser rulers such as local dukes, counts and marquises sometimes offered charters of limited autonomy to various cities in order to avoid insurrection, and sometimes to undermine the authority of their archbishop. In 1081, for example, Emperor Henry IV agreed not to build a castle within ten kilometres of Lucca. In Tuscany the late 11th and early 12th century Duchess Matilda, known as *La Gran Donna d'Italia*, found that several of her cities were growing too strong to control and, as stated in a contemporary document, 'she was no longer able to levy armies from their midst as in earlier days'.

These and other cities grew in power during the 12th century, yet they soon faced military problems. Huge increases in the cost of warfare gradually led to tighter political control and stronger tax-raising powers, enabling cities to conduct more expensive and more frequent campaigns. Nevertheless the great age of communal militia armies would end in the mid-13th century, and from then on heavily armoured, professional cavalry gradually regained dominance.

In Tuscany, however, old-style communal militias survived for longer than in the north, despite the fact that Tuscan militias had previously not been as famous as those of Lombardy. For example, aristocratic rule collapsed in Florence in 1250, to be followed by the rise of the *Primo Popolo* or 'First People's' government. To quote the famous Florentine chronicler Villani, this was when 'the lordly pride of the first *Popolo* and our ancestors was inspired by the pomp of the *carroccio* and the *martinella*' (see below, 'Strategy and Tactics'). Even so, Florence would change from a city in arms to one that relied on 'foreign' – i.e. non-Florentine – mercenaries. Meanwhile Tuscany was wracked by almost continual strife between and within the cities, Italy itself becoming a battlefield which attracted mercenaries from half of Europe.



The ruins of the strategic castle of Carpineti, which was one of the most important fortifications controlled by Matilda of Tuscany in the late 11th century.

Once again the maritime republics differed from the inland cities. Pisa won effective independence around 1100, its republican government gradually transforming into a semi-democratic system led by elected consuls. Genoa developed a very military and aggressive character dominated by the *compagna*, now an association of all free arms-bearing men which became the effective government of the city. Internal strife within Genoa also seems to have been more violent than in most other Italian cities.

Until the mid-12th century Rome had been under the sovereign rule of the Pope, but various internal struggles between rival Popes and 'anti-Popes', and between Pope and Emperor, undermined the political status of the Papacy. Under such circumstances the Popes had little control over those large areas of central Italy which supposedly owed them feudal allegiance. It was not until the 13th century that the growing authority and military effectiveness of Papal government led to the creation of the Papal States as anything approaching a territorial unit.

Feudal armies

Both the feudal, largely rural armies and those raised by the cities included cavalry and infantry, *milites* and *pedites*. In feudal armies the *pedites* included free men and those of servile origin, though the latter were largely non-combatant and their service was almost a form of forced labour. Free men included conscripts and mercenaries; their tasks were to defend the baggage train, erect and defend camps, build and operate siege machines, fight as archers, and inflict as much damage as possible on enemy territory as *guastatori* or 'ravagers'. For a free man, military service and the bearing of arms was a mark of status.

Isolated towers forming outworks were a feature of several mountain-top castles in the Alpine regions of northern Italy, like this example at the 12th century Castel Appiano overlooking the Adige valley. (Author's photograph)

For the feudal élite, *omaggio* or homage was a bilateral contract in return for a territorial fief, salary, pension or the 'hospitality' which a senior member of the aristocracy offered a junior.

During the 10th and early 11th century almost all feudal troops tended to be called *milites.* A class of professional, free-born and hereditary cavalry then emerged, but not until the late 11th century did the term *milites* come to refer to 'knights' as they would now be understood. This lesser nobility assumed military leadership as a class of *nobilitas* and *capitanei,* forming the basis of the *equites* or mounted troops in armies like that of Duchess Matilda of Tuscany. The military following of a lord was usually called a *masnada* or *masnata,* which probably came from the Arabic term *masnad* meaning a 'support' or 'prop'. At the beginning of the 11th century a member of this feudal aristocracy usually still lived in a rural castle known as a *rocca* or a *castello.* The Church was also tied into this feudal system, with bishops and abbots owing military obligations for the lands or cities under their control.

Even when rural areas fell under the control of cities these feudal military structures often survived, with the local lord now owing military obligations to the city. Many noble families, though retaining a rural powerbase, owned property in the cities and sent junior members of the family to live there. In later years some cities fell under the control of such aristocratic clans; while other members of the old aristocracy re-appeared as successful *condottieri* – professional mercenaries with ready-made armies for hire.

Another distinctive feature of northern Italy's feudal military structure was the *scutiferi.* In the 12th century these were neither *armiger* squires nor undubbed knights; instead they were prosperous peasants who held some sort of unclear fief called a *feudum scutiferi* and were, in effect, one rank below the *valvassor minor,* who could in turn be described as the lowest rank of knights. When the *scutiferi* arrived at an army muster they were expected to have a *roncin* or ordinary type of horse, whereas the *milites* rode a much more expensive *destrier* or *palfry.* The *scutiferi's* armour was also rather basic, though better than that expected of a foot soldier. As such they formed a corps of light cavalry, sometimes harassing the enemy before the heavy cavalry charged. Even more important was their role in ravaging enemy territory. *Scutiferi* seem to have disappeared by the mid-13th century, some perhaps evolving into those *consorterie* or groups of men who were jointly responsible for maintaining one cavalryman with the full equipment of a knight.

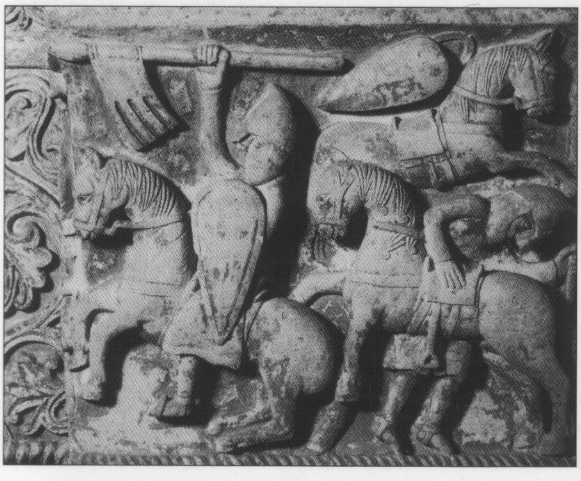
Other 12th century feudal but non-knightly troops included the obscure *bubulci* armed with sword and bow; and the *zafones,* who seem to have been irregular troops from the rugged Marche region. Certainly the inhabitants of mountain valleys came from a very different society to that of the city-dominated lowlands. Though widely despised as poverty-stricken roughnecks, these mountain men were admitted to be tough and warlike, with the makings of good soldiers.

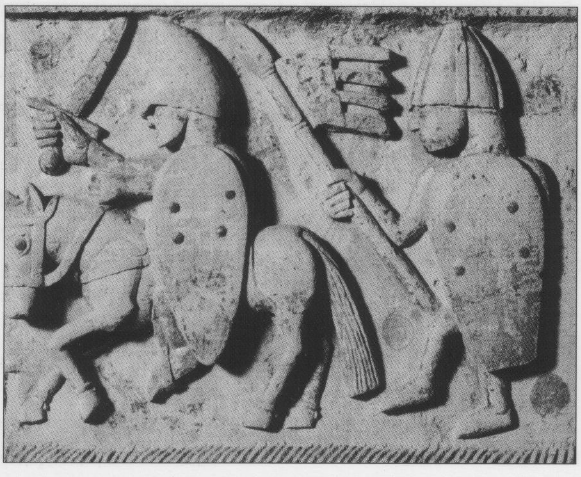
During the 12th century the Papacy maintained a force of mercenaries, but this was more like a bodyguard than an army. During the 13th century, however, the military organisation of Papal armies became similar to that seen elsewhere. Feudal summons were usually made via *rectors* or local representatives, but were more effective if they came directly from the Pope. On other occasions towns within the Papal States sent a cash contribution called a *tallia militum* instead of men. Certainly the Papacy now recruited substantial numbers of volunteers, both mercenaries and those who regarded themselves as Crusaders against the Popes' enemies within Italy. In fact it was often difficult to distinguish mercenaries from allies in such Crusader armies, since most were paid troops.

The organisation of these Italian feudal armies was similar to those of France or Germany, leadership being based upon feudal status and age. For example, the army of Duchess Matilda of Tuscany, escorting the Pope through unfriendly territory, was commanded by the barons of Spoleto, Amelia, Perugia and Camerino. Not until the 13th century did specialised military units appear in such forces, the Count of Savoy creating a 'Company of Archers' in Aosta in 1206. Not many years later a terrifyingly effective force suddenly emerged in northern Italy. This was the army of Ezzelino di Romano, one of the most ferocious Ghibelline commanders, which seems to have been a self-contained, self-sufficient and clearly very mobile force which was reportedly divided into *centuries* and other such regular units. It would have a profound impact upon subsequent Italian military organisation.

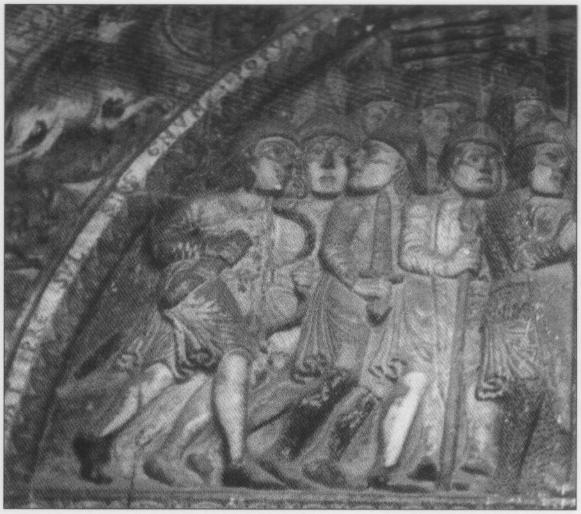
Communal armies

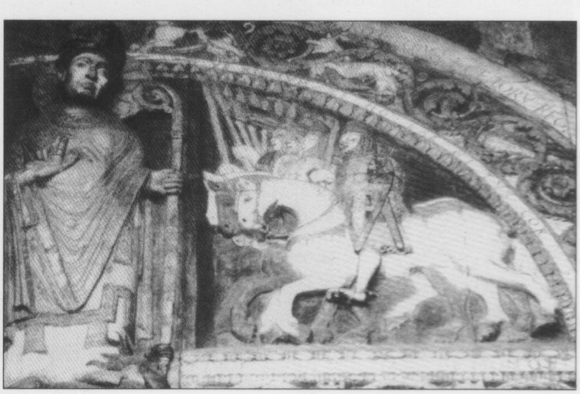
The first evidence for an Italian local militia is the late 10th century Charter of Tenda, a small town near the modern frontier with France, which mentions 'local men of the army of this place'. By 1000 several Italian cities had their own *primi milites* or *milites majores*, as well as a *vidame* (usually the lieutenant of the ruling bishop), plus 'captains of the people' and 'captains of the gates'. They commanded the *milites minores* or *secundi milites*, the *vavassores* or 'under-vassals', lesser *vavassini* and





The oldest relief carvings in Parma Cathedral date from 1150–70, and are amongst the most important sources of information about 12th century military equipment. They also illustrate saddles without riders (left); and an infantryman with a flat-based mantlet shield and a segmented or fluted helmet (right). (*in situ* Cathedral, Parma; photographs Luca Tascinelli)





On one side of Christ in Majesty are the infantry of Verona's urban militia (top), while on the other side are the knights and other militia cavalry (above). (*in situ* Church of San Zeno, Verona; photographs author & Ian Peirce)

'citizens' who were expected to defend the city walls. The chronicles of late 10th century Milan and early 11th century Tuscany also refer to an urban aristocracy who served as *novitiis capitaneis.*

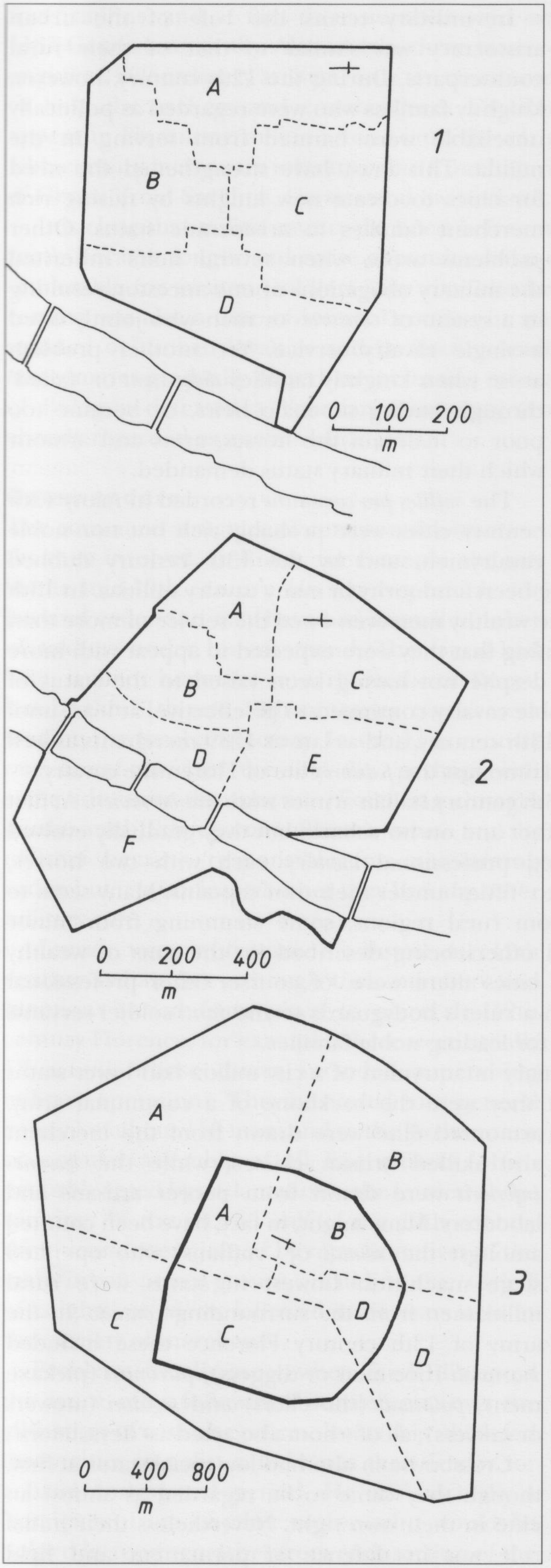
In Rome, during the tumultuous 9th and 10th centuries, local levies served alongside a 'Roman Army' which consisted of the local aristocracy led by its own nobility. The old Romano-Byzantine term *exercitus* for the Byzantine-style local army was also dropped in favour of the term *militia.* By the 11th century this was clearly quite effective, yet there was no clear link between military obligation and the ownership of property, as seen in most other places.

Generally speaking the most obvious difference between the military levies of the Carolingian period and the later urban militia levies of northern Italy was that military duties which had once been an unwelcome burden were now a source of pride for the *citadini* citizens. Cities even hoped that their poorest inhabitants would take up arms, though the middle class *popolo* largely excluded the poor from political life; they were seen as vulnerable to bribery and manipulation by powerful aristocratic families. The demands of political fear and military effectiveness may have clashed when it came to recruiting urban militias. In 12th century Florence, for example, the nobles often fought in person, the aristocracy of the city and its *contado* providing most of the cavalry. Although the *popolane* middle class largely served as infantry, their wealthier members could also be found amongst the cavalry. On the other hand much of the wealthy 13th century urban aristocracy was not of long-standing noble origin, but had only recently been ennobled because of their city's need for more horsemen. Furthermore, there were usually some mercenaries amongst the cavalry, and often amongst the infantry as well.

Considering the importance of professional *condottieri* armies in later medieval Italy (see MAA 136, *Italian Medieval Armies 1300–1500*), it is perhaps surprising to find that paid professionals appeared later in northern and central Italy than they did in many other parts of Europe. During the 12th and early 13th centuries their numbers remained small, but then rose significantly. Some professional soldiers came from outside the country, especially from France and Germany. Others came from poorer regions of Italy itself, such as the cavalry from Trieste and Istria who fought for Venice. Though serving in increasing numbers, these men still seem to have been enlisted as individuals recruited by agents sent to the mercenaries' local towns, rather than being hired as ready-made *condottieri* armies. They also appear to have remained generally true to their own original Guelph or Ghibelline loyalties when choosing their employers. Nor was their status high, and for the aristocracy employment as a mercenary seems to have been the final refuge for men too poor to do anything else or too proud to enter commerce.

Some Italian cities were large by medieval European standards, and their militia infantry normally ranged between 1,000 and 2,000 men. As a result the Lombard Leagues of northern Italy could raise remarkably large forces. One such army in 1231 is estimated to have included 3,000 cavalry, 10,000 infantry spearmen and 1,500 infantry crossbowmen. While preparing for a campaign which culminated in the battle of Montaperti in 1260, Florence raised an army of 1,400 local knights, 6,000 city infantry, 8,000 rural infantry and 200 mercenary cavalry.

Men were only paid while serving in their militia, though local commanders received a small retainer throughout the year. In the Montaperti campaign Florence paid its city cavalry 6 pounds 15 shillings a month, mercenary cavalry 8 florins a month, urban crossbowmen 3 shillings a day, ordinary archers 2 shillings 8 pence per day, *pavesarii* shield-bearers 2 shillings 6 pence a day, ordinary infantrymen 2 shillings a day, sappers and miners 1 shilling per day. Fines for absence were substantial – 10 pounds for cavalry, 5 pounds for infantry – while selling a horse required for military service was a major offense. In 13th century Florence, militia infantry were usually summoned for ten days to two weeks, only some quarters of the city being called up at any one time so that economic activity was not unduly disrupted. City officials ensured that cavalrymen met their obligations, that their horses and equipment were up to scratch, and investigated claims for compensation for injury or loss. Different officials were responsible for the mercenaries, while in other cities the *podesta* and his officials enforced military regulations. Alternative systems were used to impose military obligations on the surrounding *contado.*



Medieval Italian cities were divided into sectors, each of which maintained a militia unit. As some cities grew the number of sectors was increased, while in other cities the original sectors were merely extended. They were often named after the nearest city gate, 'porta'. *(1) Florence c.1100:* (A) Porta Domus, (B) Porta S.Pancratii, (C) Porta S.Petri, (D) Porta S.Mariae. *(2) Florence c.1300 – 'sesto' means 'a sixth':* (A) Sesto di Porta del Duomo, (B) Sesto di S.Pancrazio, (C) Sesto di S.Pietro Maggiore, (D) Sesto S.Trinità, (E) Sesto di S.Pietro Scheraggio, (F) Sesti di Oltrarno. *(3) Bologna c.1300, showing the earlier city wall:* (A) Porta Stiera, (B) Porta Piera, (C) Porta Procola, (D) Porta Ravennate. (After J.Heers)

The Broletto or Old Town Hall of Brescia was built between 1187 and 1230, while the attached Torre del Popolo dates from the 11th century. (Author's photograph)

In military terms the role of the urban aristocracy was similar to that of their rural counterparts. During the 12th century, however, knightly families who were regarded as politically unreliable were banned from serving in the militia. This must have strengthened the need for cities to create new knights by raising rich merchant families to aristocratic status. Other problems arose when several heirs inherited the military obligations of one ancestor, resulting in a system of *consortes* or men who jointly owed a single cavalry service. Yet another problem arose when knightly families *defecerunt* or 'failed' through having no male heirs, or became too poor to maintain the horses, arms and armour which their military status demanded.

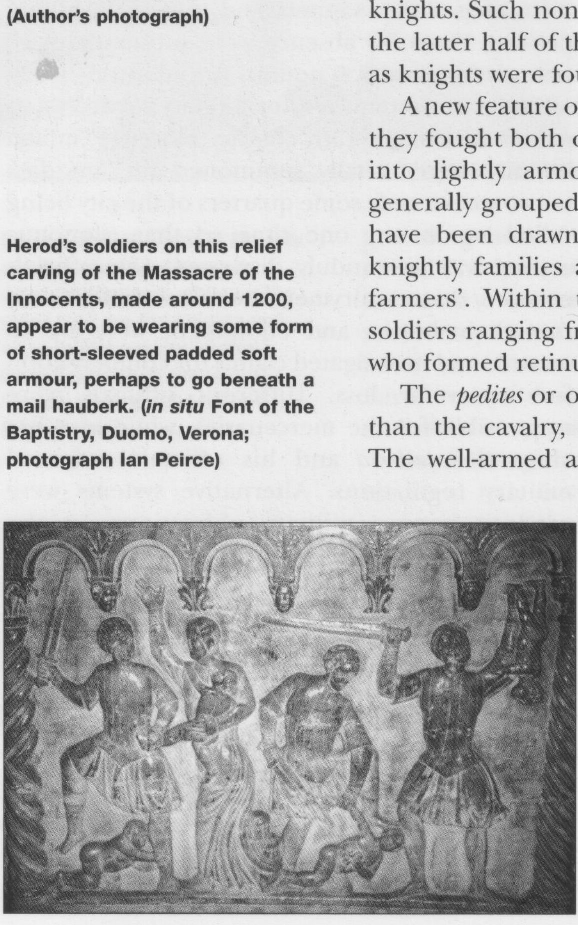
The *milites pro commune* recorded in many 12th century cities were probably rich but non-noble cavalrymen, and by the 13th century dubbed knights may even have been a minority in many cavalry militias. In 13th century Florence some wealthy men even owed the service of more than one cavalryman, meaning that they were expected to appear with more than one horseman despite not having been raised to the status of knights. Such non-noble cavalry continued to be effective, at least until the latter half of the 13th century, and as late as 1289 merchants as well as knights were found amongst the *feditori* élite of Florentine cavalry.

A new feature of 13th century Italian armies were the *berrovieri*. At first they fought both on foot and on horseback, but they gradually evolved into lightly armoured professional cavalry each with two horses, generally grouped into 'fifties' under their own captains. Many seem to have been drawn from rural regions, some stemming from minor knightly families and others being described as 'the sons of wealthy farmers'. Within the cities there were, of course, other professional soldiers ranging from a ruler's bodyguards to the *fanti* soldier-servants who formed retinues for leading noble families.

The *pedites* or ordinary infantrymen of a city militia had lower status than the cavalry, but they were the backbone of a communal army. The well-armed and armoured élite were drawn from the merchant and skilled artisan classes, while the *iuvenes inferioris* were drawn from poorer artisans and labourers. Many might, in fact, have been counted amongst the *ribaldi* or 'ruffians' who operated siege machines. Lowest in status were rural militiamen from the surrounding *contado*. In the army of 13th century Florence these included *marraioli* (hoe-men or diggers), *picconari* (pickaxe men), *palaiuoli* (shovellers) and *segatori* (mowers or sawyers), all of whom also acted as 'devastators'.

Crossbowmen also had low social status at first, though they came to be regarded as almost an élite in their own right. Nevertheless their initial role was in defence of permanent and field

Herod's soldiers on this relief carving of the Massacre of the Innocents, made around 1200, appear to be wearing some form of short-sleeved padded soft armour, perhaps to go beneath a mail hauberk. (*in situ* Font of the Baptistry, Duomo, Verona; photograph Ian Peirce)



fortifications, and at first their numbers were small. For example, in 1181 Genoa lent its ally, Alessandria, three master-carpenters, a military engineer, 200 ordinary archers, only ten crossbowmen, and 100 servants to help the archers and crossbowmen. Crossbowmen did not even appear in Florentine militia armies until the early 13th century. Other 13th century mercenary infantry came from Liguria to the east and west of Genoa, from Sardinia, Corsica and Switzerland.

It is clear that militia cavalry declined before militia infantry did so, partly because longer and more expensive military campaigns became intolerable for amateur soldiers who were also businessmen. The 13th century was also a time of internal conflict in many cities, resulting in strained or broken loyalties and ineffective leadership. Consequently, mercenaries gradually played an increasing role; and when the militias of Bologna defeated a Venetian mercenary army in 1270, this was already regarded as a remarkable feat.

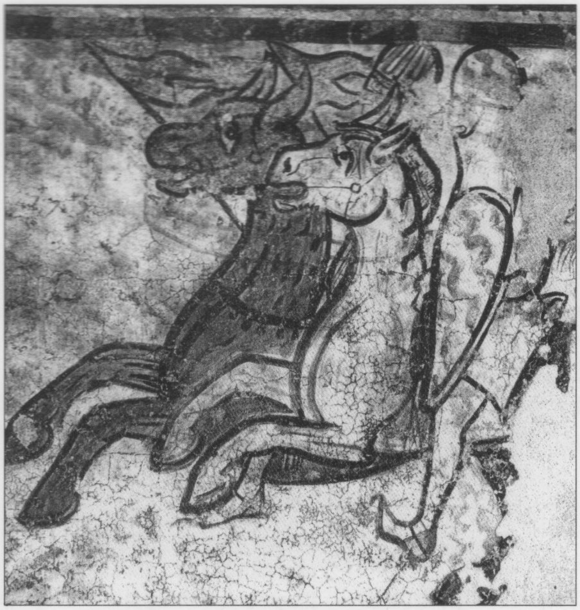
Commanders

The command structure of communal armies varied, as did the titles of the men involved. In Rome, for example, the title of *prefect* re-appeared in the mid-10th century. He was responsible for law and order and may have had a small number of soldiers under his command. The *consul* had been a mere honorific in early medieval Rome, but by the 11th and 12th centuries *consuls* were leading the local aristocracy. In the 11th century one *consul* also had the title *dux*, perhaps with some administrative function. Following changes in the mid-12th century, Rome's *senate* and its officers became responsible for maintaining order, but it is unclear whether they had any other military role.

Consuls were a feature of almost all 12th century Italian cities, though their numbers and functions varied from place to place. In 12th century Florence, for example, there were usually 12 *consuls* whose duties included supervising military operations. They answered to a general council of about 150 men, and to the *parlamentum* or popular assembly of all free citizens which probably voted by acclamation – the loudest shout winning. In the second half of the 12th century these *consuls* were joined by representatives of the main urban power groups, including the 'society of knights' or *milites,* followed some years later by the 'society of merchants'.

Problems usually arose when feuds disrupted the peace, often following disagreements over the allocation of consular offices. It was this which led many cities to enlist a *podesta* as their leader for a fixed and agreed period. He was normally a 'foreigner' from another region who would be helped by representatives from each section of the

The Palazzo dei Priori in Volterra is the oldest communal palace in Tuscany and was built in the first half of the 13th century. (Photograph Stefani)



The 13th century wall-paintings in the Old Town Hall of Novara are in a rather crude style; nevertheless, note that the wavy heraldic pattern on the nearest rider's shield is repeated on his helmet. (Museum Civico, Il Broletto, Novara)

city. The *podesta* would be of knightly rank (except perhaps in the smallest communes), and his responsibilities included military command.

The earliest *capitanei* or captains similarly had military responsibilities; they and the *valvassori* dominating the militias of cities like Milan in the 12th century. The *capitano del popolo* or Captain of the People was, however, a new position which appeared in the mid-13th century. He looked after the interests of the non-aristocratic middle class and its infantry militia by counterbalancing the power of the longer established *podesta.* In earlier days the *popolo* had been led by a council of *anziani* 'elders' or *priors,* some chosen by the guilds, some by the regional divisions of the city. They normally served for two to six months, during which time they ruled from an imposing *palazzo del popolo.*

Like the *podestas,* most *capitanei del popolo* were 'foreigners' who were expected to be free from entanglement with local interests. They might serve for six months or a year, and usually came from the same knightly class as the *podestas*; in fact some men played both roles during their careers. Where the *popolo* took control of the government, the *capitano del popolo* became even more important and was in effective command of the *gonfaloni* militia companies. In Florence the *primo popolo* actually abolished the old *societas militum* or 'Society of Knights' and limited the height of private *torri* fortified towers to 29 metres. Yet this was hardly a democratic government, and continuing factional struggles led to the formation of the *priorate*, a guild-based oligarchy which ruled Florence through the 14th century. Even in communal armies military commanders tended to come from the nobility, simply because they had greater experience of warfare than did the *popolo.* On the other hand, strategic and even tactical decisions were often made by the city government.

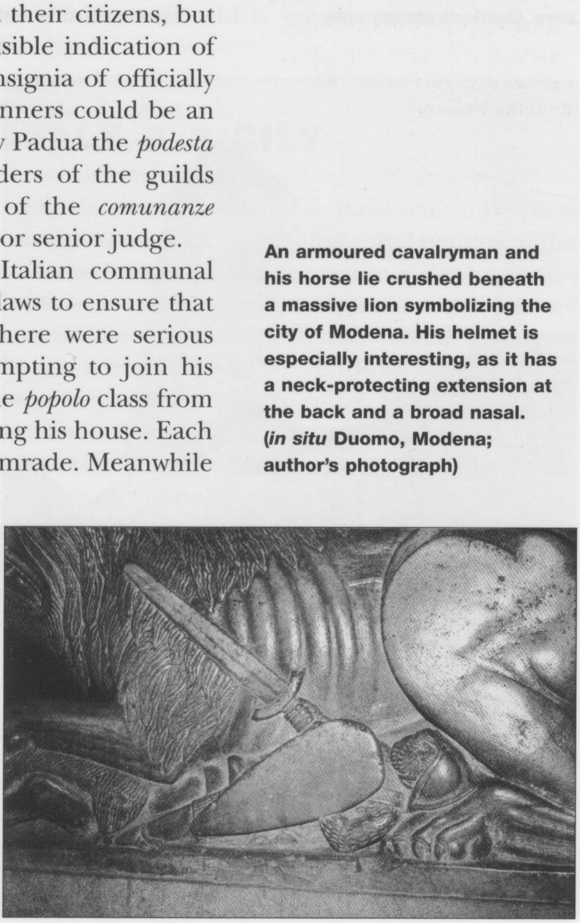
Unit organisation

Militia soldiers normally lived at home but professionals and those designated for special duties might be allocated barracks called *ospedali.* Paid soldiers or *soldaerii* lived in the *dominus* or house of the man who had hired them or, if they had been hired by the commune, could be found accommodation around the city. The basic structure of communal militias depended upon sworn associations of knightly cavalry and non-noble infantry, the *commune militum* and *commune peditum,* but most infantry militias were also divided into units reflecting the quarter of the city where the individual militiaman lived. This unit was sometimes called a 'gate', reflecting one of the main gates in a city wall. Each had its own banner, colour or heraldic insignia and sometimes its own musicians.

The crossbowmen were perhaps the first to form infantry units of men armed in a particular way, again with their own *maestranze* officers and flags. It is also possible that recognised 'battles' or battlefield formations existed amongst infantry militia as they did amongst cavalry, but these are unlikely to have been permanent units. The 'tower societies' who owned many of the fortified towers which dominated the Italian urban skyline were a different matter. Membership was strictly controlled, and the societies were like 'brotherhoods of warriors' with their own distinctive entry rituals. Members paid an annual fee for the repair and maintenance of their tower, while the society also tried to gain control of the area immediately around it.

Communal military organisation became more complex in the 13th century. Cavalry militias generally seem to have been divided into small units of around 25 men, as elsewhere in Europe, and the infantry were similarly structured. In Verona, for example, the foot soldiers were divided into small units which could undertake the duties of *guaite* to guard the city walls, and *decene* or garrison duty in an outlying castle. The *popolo* government of Florence restructured its militia infantry into 20 *gonfaloni* companies, like larger versions of the previous neighbourhood militia associations. In battle Florentine infantry used *venticinquine* or units of 25, whereas most cities used *decine* or units of ten. Crossbowmen tended to remain distinctive units in the 13th century, usually with a separate organisation. In late 13th century Perugia, for example, they were commanded by three *constables.* In Cremona there was a special guard of crossbowmen to watch the city gates, as may have been common elsewhere. On the other hand the wearing of special insignia was widely seen as contributing to factional violence, and many city authorities banned not only oaths of fealty amongst their citizens, but also the wearing of *cottardita* or coats-of-arms as a visible indication of such fealty. It was different with the banners and insignia of officially recognised militia units, and the presentation of banners could be an occasion for considerable pomp. In late 13th century Padua the *podesta* handed the *vexilla* banners to the *gastaldiones* leaders of the guilds at a special ceremony, while the great standard of the *comunanze* or commune itself was given to the *iudex ancianorum* or senior judge.

Discipline had always been a major asset for Italian communal armies, and urban governments enacted numerous laws to ensure that this remained so. In mid-13th century Florence there were serious penalties for anyone obstructing a militiaman attempting to join his company. Other regulations banned a member of the *popolo* class from helping a magnate or nobleman, or even from entering his house. Each member of the militia was also bound to avenge a comrade. Meanwhile various officials including the *capitano del popolo* were responsible for keeping roads free from robbers, bridges in good repair and fires from breaking out.



An armoured cavalryman and his horse lie crushed beneath a massive lion symbolizing the city of Modena. His helmet is especially interesting, as it has a neck-protecting extension at the back and a broad nasal. (*in situ* Duomo, Modena; author's photograph)

Training and logistics

Military training was taken seriously. The first *camp de bataglia* was recorded at Genoa as early as 1069, and many more were known in the 12th century. Training emphasised discipline, the use of weapons, unit cohesion and good co-ordination between horse and foot. Above all, infantry were trained to stand firm under the moral pressure of a cavalry charge. Such infantry training was undertaken regularly in specially designated areas, often in front of major churches or on stretches of road. The spectacle provided by militia cavalry repeatedly charging militia infantry, and *pugna* mock fights with wooden weapons between lines of foot soldiers, may even have become a counterpart to the better known cavalry tournaments. During the late 12th and 13th centuries there were references to 'stick fights', 'battles with small shields' and others with ordinary larger shields, the teams normally being based upon the quarters of a city. All classes took part, including the knights, and although proper armour was worn there were strict regulations about not using iron weapons. Crossbow training was taken equally seriously, and in the 12th century some cities also insisted on practice with spears and the *verga sardesca*, which may have been a form of javelin. As late as 1270 the *Societa del Popolo* in Cremona ordered its *capitano* to ensure that the crossbow militia trained with spears and swords as well.

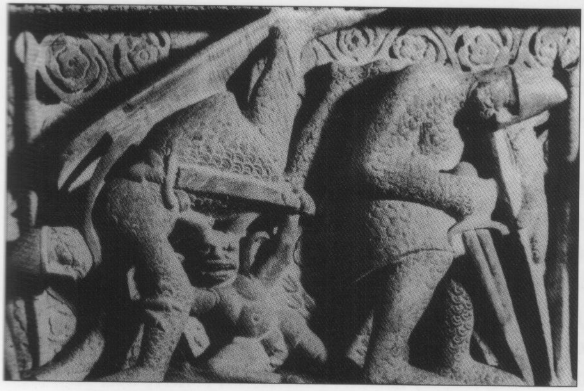
Not surprisingly, communal governments specified what arms and armour a militiaman was expected to possess, and tried to ensure an adequate supply of such equipment. In some places, as in late 13th century Padua, the guilds took over responsibility for supervising militia equipment, and in many cities there were clear efforts to standardise arms and armour. In fact some late 13th century Italian urban militias had virtually uniform weaponry and clothing, strengthening morale and intimidating foes by demonstrating a city's power and discipline.

Given the wealth of many cities, it is hardly surprising to find that their commissariat systems could be quite sophisticated. In 13th century Florence the army's supply train was divided into two corps with a special guard unit under its own officer designated to defend the *carroccio* 'banner waggon' (see below), while another captain was placed in command of non-combatant camp followers. Many urban armies were accompanied by their own smiths and doctors, while a city's merchants and artisans were ordered to supply the army with whatever it needed. Pack horses and war horses were sometimes demanded as regularly enforced 'loans'. The commune of late 13th century Perugia took responsibility for supplying food to its army in the field and organising its distribution. At the same time there was strict control over materials going in and out of the city gates – economic warfare was a vital weapon in quarrels between rival cities.

The tiny Tuscan town of San Gimignano is famous for having more surviving medieval *torri* than anywhere else; but it also has other medieval fortifcations, such as the Arco dei Becci gate shown here. (Author's photograph)

Corsica and Sardinia

The military situation on these islands was different. Here much of the population was not, in fact, Italian and led a completely different, largely pastoral way of life. Both islands had been effectively independent since the 7th or 8th century but Corsica, unlike Sardinia, did maintain close links with the mainland. As Islam lost



'Guards at the Holy Sepulchre', carved by Guglielmo in 1159. They have the very latest arms and armour, including long-sleeved mail hauberk with integral mittens, and mail chausses fully protecting their legs. (*in situ* Pulpit of the Cathedral, Cagliari, Sardinia)

control of the western Mediterranean in the 11th century, the coastal regions of Sardinia fell under Pisan domination; but in the 12th century both islands became a bone of contention between Pisa and Genoa – though it was their coastal regions that really interested Pisans and Genoese.

The political organisation of Corsica was based on the clan or extended family and power was fragmented, though the old church-based parish structure survived. Since the 9th century Sardinia had been divided into four small states, each ruled by a *iudike* or judge. Sardinian society was not feudal and the majority of the peasant population were little better than slaves; the few small towns were each governed by a *curatoru* who represented the ruling *iudike.* In 1164 the Emperor Frederick proclaimed one ambitious *iudike* 'King of all Sardinia', but even he, like the other local rulers, had very limited military resources and so relied on outside help. From then on the most effective forces on both islands were foreigners, while indigenous Sard warriors mainly appear as mercenaries fighting for other Italian states. Most of the many campaigns which involved Corsica and Sardinia were combined operations – naval landings and the maintenance of isolated coastal garrisons. The few campaigns which ventured into the interior seem to have been *cavalcata* raids which could, nevertheless, run the whole length of the island.

SOUTHERN ITALY & SICILY

Southern Italy and Sicily formed one of the most culturally and politically varied parts of 11th century Europe. Substantial regions of the mainland formed part of the Byzantine Empire, while Sicily had been part of the Islamic world since the 9th century. Contacts with Islamic civilisation – military, economic and political – also linked the south to a wider world, and between the 7th and 11th centuries southern Italy saw astonishing economic expansion. On the other hand, the threat from seaborne raiders meant that most new settlements were inland, in areas which had been neglected in Roman times.

Meanwhile the Lombards, who had regrouped in southern Italy after losing control of the north to Charlemagne, established a state which subsequently fragmented into a number of often competing principalities. Although these little Lombard states became rich they were, by the 11th century, militarily very weak.

The Byzantine provinces in southern Italy lie outside the scope of this book (see MAA 89, *Byzantine Armies 886–1118*); but it is worth noting that their populations were mostly Latin or Italian, except for some Greek-speaking enclaves and the descendants of Arab-Islamic colonists. The heavy militia duties which the Byzantine Empire had imposed on the towns of southern Italy probably also continued after the Norman takeover.

On the west coast were a number of autonomous enclaves which acknowledged a distant Byzantine overlordship. These included Naples.

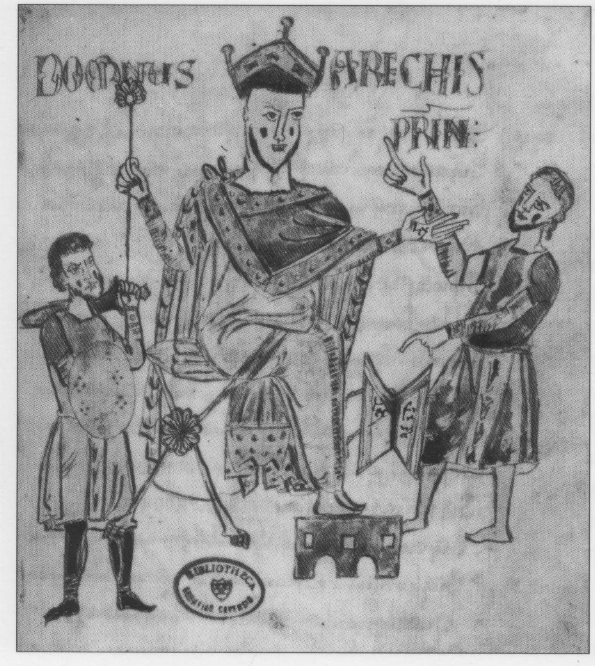
Here the bishop, fearing his Lombard neighbours, seems to have been the first Christian 'ruler' in southern Italy to form an alliance with the Muslims in the mid-9th century. As a result large numbers of Muslim soldiers were soon seen in Naples which, like Gaeta and Amalfi, also became safe havens for Islamic raiding fleets. Muslim troops were also recruited by the Lombard princes of Benevento and Salerno, but in all these areas their descendants had been integrated into local society before the Normans arrived. Meanwhile Amalfi, under nominal Byzantine supremacy, developed its own quasi-democratic government headed by an elected *prefecturius*; but in 958 the *Prefecturius* Serge Comite adopted the title of *doge* or duke, and established a monarchy which lasted until Amalfi was taken over by the Normans.

Sicily: Muslims, Normans, Hohenstaufens and Angevins

A flourishing Islamic state was, of course, established in Sicily, though this too lies outside the scope of the present title (see MAA 348, *The Moors – The Islamic West 7th–15th Centuries AD,* and MAA 320, *Armies of the Caliphates 862–1098*). By the second half of the 11th century, when the Normans invaded, the Islamic population was largely concentrated in the west of the island, probably forming a majority in the great coastal cities and in the mountains south-east of Palermo.

The people who united southern Italy were a group of somewhat unexpected warriors from the far north – the Normans. Although their conquest of southern Italy and Sicily in the second half of the 11th century was far more violent than what had gone before, the result was the creation of one of the most cultured states of the Middle Ages – the Norman Kingdom of Sicily and Southern Italy (see Elite 9, *The Normans*). They maintained the existing trade links with the Islamic world, and themselves adopted a remarkable array of Islamic-style military structures, court ceremonials and forms of architecture.

'Prince Arechis, one of his guards and a petitioner', in an 11th century manuscript made in the Lombard states of southern Italy. Byzantine and Islamic influence are obvious in the costume decoration and military equipment. (*Codex Legum Longobardorum et Francorum*, f.182r, Archivia della Badia, Cava dei Tirreni)



In the late 12th century the Norman kingdom was conquered by the German Emperor, resulting in the creation of the Hohenstaufen kingdom which again became a cultural as well as a military powerhouse. Hohenstaufen southern Italy was also noted for a government attempt to restrict the right to carry arms in public. Under the so-called Constitution of Melfi drawn up in 1231, no one was allowed to carry a weapon 'designed to injure', or to wear armour, unless they were servants of the king under royal command. Such laws did not stop frequent rebellions in Sicily, and in the mid-13th century the Hohenstaufen were themselves ousted by a French invasion which established the Angevin kingdom. This would survive on the mainland for the rest of the Middle Ages, though it lost Sicily to the Aragonese from Spain at the end of the 13th century.

The 13th century was, in fact, a period of decline in Sicily. A newly implanted northern Italian nobility clashed with the people of the cities, many of whom became increasingly antagonistic to their rulers. Rebellions and wars ruined many fertile valleys, while the rising nationalism of the urban middle class led them to ally themselves with the Spanish Aragonese.

Under Hohenstaufen rule the Muslims lost most of the privileges they had enjoyed under the Normans. This, together with pressure from newly arrived Italian settlers, culminated in a series of unsuccessful revolts, which in turn led to many Sicilian Muslims being deported; others abandoned the cities to seek refuge in the mountainous interior. The massacre and deportation of the Muslim populations virtually depopulated vast areas of the island, leaving such zones to roaming pig-farmers and brigands in the interior, and to pirates along the coasts. Finally the government forcibly deported the entire Muslim population from Sicily to the mainland, where it was formed into military colonies around Lucera in Apulia and Girifalco in Calabria. Only on the tiny islands of Pantalleria and Malta did the Muslim community keep its religious identity, the people of Malta retaining their Arabic language to this day.

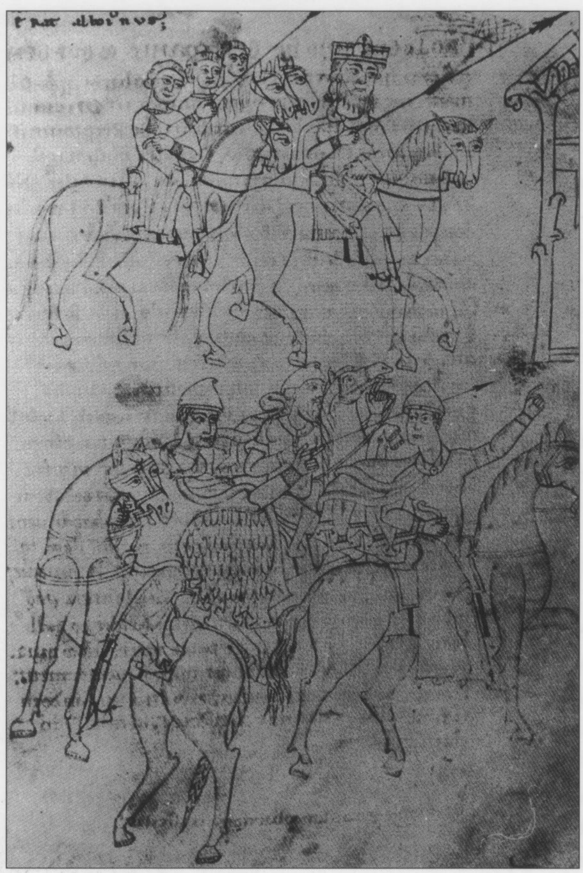
This very early 12th century carving probably illustrates the First Crusade. Some horsemen wear ordinary mail hauberks, but this figure seems to be wearing a lamellar cuirass. (*in situ* Church of San Nicola, Bari; author's photograph)

From then on the Islamic colony in and around Lucera remained fiercely loyal to their Christian king, knowing that their survival depended upon his goodwill. By now the majority spoke Italian and many of the Lucera 'Saracens' adopted European names like Riccardo and Giovanni while apparently remaining Muslim. They were not, in fact, permitted to convert to Christianity, since conversion would have removed the need for them to fight for their ruler in return for religious toleration. Following the bloody Angevin conquest of Lucera most of the soldiers were again resettled, this time around Naples, but they still had to fight for the new dynasty and were barred from converting to Christianity. In 1300, however, Charles of Anjou decided to obliterate what was left of the Muslim colony; this was done between 15 and 24 August, by offering the people the choice of conversion, expulsion, or death.

Feudal armies: the Lombard states

The decline of light cavalry seen in most of Western Europe during the early medieval period was not apparent in southern Italy. Although the small number of armoured Lombard cavalry in southern Italy were similarly equipped to their northern neighbours, most horsemen seem to have lacked armour. This probably reflected climatic rather than economic considerations, as well as military influence from neighbouring Byzantine and Islamic cultures. Military recruitment in the Lombard states was also on the basis of personal service rather than being tied to the possession of land, though some military fiefs did exist. In fact the links between rulers and their aristocracy were built upon concepts of fraternity, mutual support and the exchanging of gifts, while the relationship of *fidelitas* between soldiers and those they served was contractual rather than reflecting any dependence.

Little is known about how southern Italian Lombard armies or the rulers' companions were recruited, yet it is clear that such companions



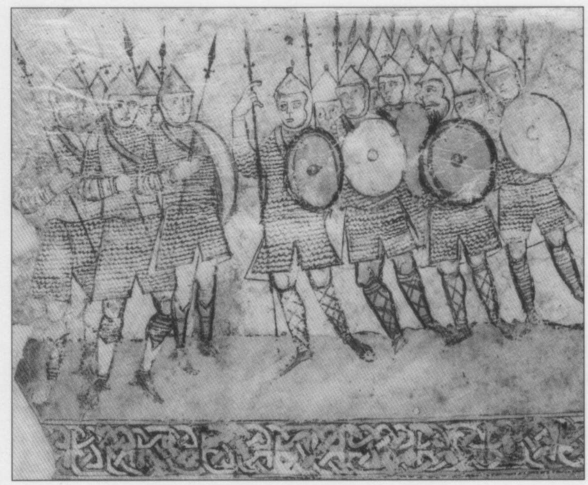
'King Alboino leads the Lombard invasion of Italy' in a late 12th century manuscript from Verona. Two of the horsemen have Islamic-style decorative *tiraz* bands around their upper arms – cf Plate C3. (Bib. Apost. Vaticana, Rome)

played a major military role. The tiny armies of the Lombard states consisted of a *comitatus* of the ruler's few *fideles* and *optimates* – a word of Byzantine origin. Some troops in a *comitatus* were sometimes called *sodales,* meaning paid soldiers, or *proceres,* or *iuvenes.* Though largely recruited from resident local families, a *comitatus* also included newcomers who had settled as a result of the prince's support. Additional paid soldiers could be enlisted for a particular campaign; and a Lombard ruler also expected the support of his *primores, magnates* or senior aristocracy with their own even smaller military followings.

Equites or cavalry were mentioned only rarely, giving the impression that the southern Lombards were seriously short of horsemen. Infantry *pedestrium* or *pedites* were more numerous, and defensive siege warfare was the normal Lombard strategy. In fact many pre-Norman castles seem to have been garrisoned by local troops of servile or serf origin, and in an emergency the whole *populus* or male population could be summoned.

Another distinctive feature of the Lombard south was the concept of the 'sacred palace'. This served as a base for the ruler and his companions, the *consanguinei* 'relatives' and *fideles,* 'faithful ones'. A description by Abbot Radoald of Prince Arechis' palaces in Salerno at the end of the 10th century stated that here the 'rich and generous prince' was surrounded by young men who were given weapons and spent their time in aristocratic pursuits such as hunting. The concept seems to recall the Byzantine Imperial Palace in Constantinople or the sacred enclosures of Islamic Caliphs in Baghdad and Cairo. Most senior military and administrative figures seem to have been related to the prince, but the term *famuli* also included 'good servants', such as those who rebuilt the fortifications of Salerno for Prince Grimoald I. Another long-established Lombard term of status or rank was *gastald,* which usually indicated the governorship of a region or city; by the 11th century some senior *gastalds* had been given the title of *comes* or count and their positions were hereditary. Senior churchmen also had important military responsibilities in the Lombard principalities, the Abbot of Montecassino normally being accompanied by a substantial retinue of *equites* or cavalry.

Few details are known of how Lombard forces or the 'sacred palace' were structured. The most important dignitary seems to have been the treasurer, while the *vestarius* – whose role continued under Norman rule – was again largely concerned with money matters. The Count of the Palace dealt with matters of justice, while the ruler's *famuli* maintained law and order. Some of the *famuli* were sometimes called *satellites* or *milites* and included the *socii* or 'companions in arms'. Nevertheless the overall impression is of a government system more concerned with finance that warfare, perhaps because the Lombard principalities were



'The Army of the Emperor' in an *Exultet Roll* manuscript from San Vincenzo al Volturno, made between AD 981 and 987. In addition to short-hemmed mail hauberks, these soldiers have large or small round shields and spears but no appararent swords. Their helmets also seem to include very old-fashioned cheek-pieces. (Ms. Lat. 9820, f.19, Vatican Library, Rome)

maintained a distinct identity in different parts of the kingdom. Nevertheless the military organisation of Norman feudalism was theoretically straightforward. Knights usually owed 40 days' service with *hauberk* and *destrier* – armour and war-horse – each year. They also brought their own military followings, some or most of whom would have been infantry.

In Norman Sicily the administrative and military traditions were, of course, Islamic, and it is interesting to note that the reforms introduced in 1130 increased rather than decreased this Islamic influence by adopting many ideas directly from the Fatimid Caliphate in Egypt. Many of the existing Islamic *'iqta* military fiefs or estates had simply been taken over as knightly fiefs for the Norman conquerors, but as a result these tended to be small by Western European standards. An Islamic military élite survived in parts of Sicily well into the 13th century, with its own aristocratic leadership, cavalry and infantry forces. Even after being transported to Lucera and other parts of the mainland, these troops still included horsemen and foot soldiers, largely archers though with an increasing number of crossbowmen.

Hohenstaufens and Angevins

The Emperor Frederick II crushed the Christian knightly aristocracy of Sicily following a series of revolts, and under Hohenstaufen rule a new noble class was imposed which included Ghibelline exiles from several parts of the country. Though the military system remained theoretically feudal under Hohenstaufen and Angevin rule, the great barons sometimes seemed to hire out their private armies on a mercenary basis. In fact the employment of large numbers of mercenaries occurred earlier in southern Italy than it did in the north. For example, when King Manfred sent an army to help the Despot of Epirus against the Byzantine Emperor, its cavalry élite were Germans though the infantry largely consisted of Sicilians. At the battle of Benevento two-thirds of King Manfred's cavalry were Italian or German mercenaries and, apart from the 'Saracens' of Lucera, his infantry consisted almost entirely of paid Pisans and Genoese.

Charles of Anjou invaded Hohenstaufen southern Italy with a largely French and Provençal army, and his military household continued to be drawn from the same peoples. The king also welcomed the arrival of French aristocrats who, with their military retinues, occasionally visited Naples to complete their military education. Yet such forces remained few, and the king nearly always needed substantial numbers of *stipendarii* mercenaries. Some were younger sons of the military aristocracy hoping to make their military careers, while others came from urban or rural militias. Some *stipendiarii* were recruited by local provincial *justiciar* governors, but the resulting troops were often of low quality and the government generally preferred to keep local troops for local peace-keeping duties. It is also interesting to note that whereas Frenchmen and other non-Italians played a significant role in Angevin campaigns in central and northern Italy, the expeditions which Charles of Anjou sent to Greece and the Balkans largely consisted of Italians. A small number of Anatolian Turks and Kipchaq Turks from north of the Black Sea were found in Greece when Charles of Anjou took over as ruler of the Crusader Principality of Achaia in 1278; he re-enlisted them, but apparently recruited no more.

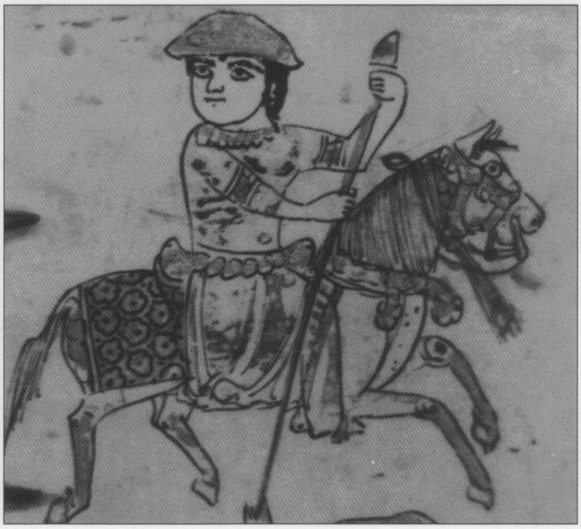
In terms of local military organisation there were few changes following the Hohenstaufen overthrow of the Norman kingdom or the Angevin overthrow of the Hohenstaufens. Some settlements developed from small villages with a simple fortified tower, into large fully fortified settlements with resident knights or even *constables.* Small details do, however, emerge. For example, in late 13th century southern Italy most infantry units had almost exactly twice as many spearmen as they did crossbowmen. There were also references to Muslim officers being placed in command of vital military bases only a few years before the 'Saracen' colony at Lucera was destroyed. Meanwhile garrisons on the outlying islands of Malta, Gozo, Pantelleria and Corfu were usually recruited from locals though commanded by royal captains.

Occasionally the Angevins demanded military service from a much broader section of the population. At the siege of Lucera, for example, Charles of Anjou demanded an armed man from every household in the kingdom or, where this was not possible, an artisan or builder 'with his tools', or at least a man with a sickle, spade or pick. Meanwhile in Sicily the massive dislocation caused by the Angevin conquest meant that the Sicilian feudal knightly class no longer had political power. Perhaps as a consequence, the 'Sicilian Vespers' – the revolt against Angevin domination in 1282 – was dominated by the island's urban élite.

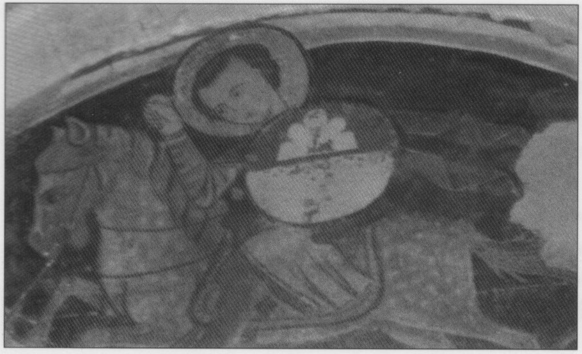
Communal armies

Urban armies played a decreasing role in southern Italy during these centuries. Since the Lombard states were not feudalised, their rulers may have depended upon urban militias to a greater extent than is realised. Certainly, walled towns were central to their conduct of warfare. Salerno had been strongly fortified since the late 10th century, and just over half a century later the Lombard city of Capua was able to put up a fierce resistance to the Norman invaders. The Normans were content to leave some citadels and fortified gates under the control of the local citizens, Capua being one example.

Local defence in the Byzantine provinces had largely been the responsibility of local militias and several of these transferred their allegiance to the Normans, helping them expel the Byzantine garrisons. In the autonomous cities of the western coast, defence was clearly in the hands of local citizens led by dominant local families. The only such city to have a permanent army was Naples; this force included *milites* with estates both inside and outside the city, while the fact that the ruling 'judge' later called himself the *magister militum* indicated a significant military role. The *milites* of Naples were effective enough for the Norman



This painted ivory box was made by a Muslim craftsman in 12th or 13th century southern Italy or Sicily. The costume and horse-harness suggest that the rider is a so-called 'Saracen' from Sicily or the transported garrison of Lucera. (Museo Nazionale di Bargello, Florence; author's photograph)



This remarkable 13th century wall painting shows a warrior saint slaying a serpent. He is portrayed as a light cavalryman, and has more in common with the Muslim troops of Sicily and Lucera than with a Western European knight. (*in situ* University, Palermo; photograph Ian Peirce)

conquerors to give them fiefs ten years after taking control of the city.

Within the Norman state non-feudal urban militias again played a role which may have been quite important, at least in the coastal cities. Inland the situation is more obscure, though the term *nostre militie* may have included urban militias. Naples, Amalfi and Gaeta contributed men and ships as a form of feudal obligation, but the naval obligations of Sicilian coastal towns were greater; in fact the mainland towns generally enjoyed greater autonomy than did those of Sicily.

The military importance of towns apparently declined under Hohenstaufen and Angevin rule, though even in the late 13th century a small Calabrian town like Nicotera still had a militia commanded by a French knight. After the Sicilian Vespers uprising in Sicily the local urban militias seized control of fortifications in the cities and countryside. Five years later the people of Catania, now under Aragonese rule, enthusiastically armed themselves to defend their city against an Angevin counter-attack. Nevertheless this was a period of chaos and economic decline; Sicily became a backwater where fear of violence led the authorities to try to ban anyone except a recognised member of the aristocracy from carrying a sword or even a knife. They failed, and many members of the rival *comitiva* political gangs took to wearing armour as well as weapons hidden beneath their clothes.

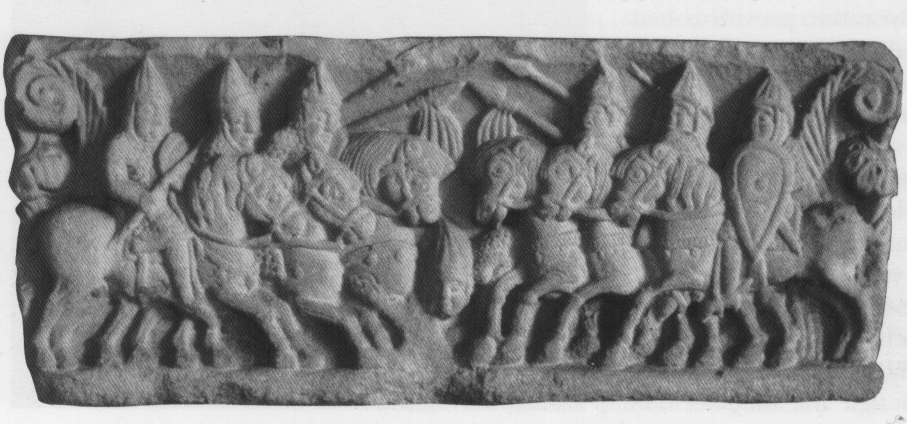
STRATEGY & TACTICS

The strategy and tactics of Italian communal armies were controlled by the communal authorities and their officers, but decisions on alliances and major campaigns had to be ratified by the full council. A city government even had the power to transfer whole populations into newly fortified settlements, or from vulnerable areas to more central ones – this was a frequent occurrence from the 11th to 13th centuries. During the early part of this period towns were supposedly 'conquering' their surrounding rural *contados*, but most castles were forced to submit as a result of intimidation rather than direct attack. In other cases the supposed subjection was more like an alliance.

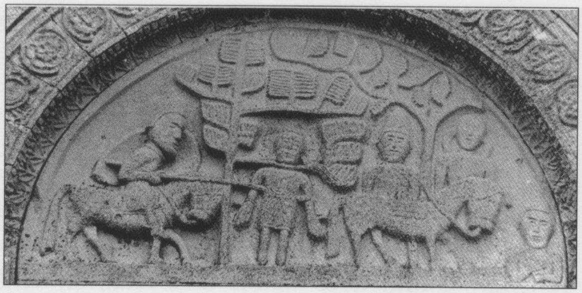
The 11th and 12th centuries saw a number of major battles, especially in northern Italy. When two armies were campaigning in the open, the danger of one ambushing the other as it mustered at its assembly point was taken very seriously, and there was clearly plenty

(continued on page 33)

This early 12th century carving came from the Church of San Giovanni in Borgo. The arms and armour are typical of the period, and all the riders have fluted helmets. (Archaeological Museum, Castello Visconteo, Pavia; author's photograph)



of 'war of manoeuvre' in the 11th and 12th ceturies. For example, when the Emperor Henry failed in his siege of Montebello in the late 11th century he attempted a feigned retreat with the intention of suddenly attacking nearby Canossa; but the garrison of Montebello pursued the Imperial army closely, while the garrison of Canossa made an unexpected sortie. As a result Henry's troops were attacked from both the front and rear in dense fog, suffering a major defeat.



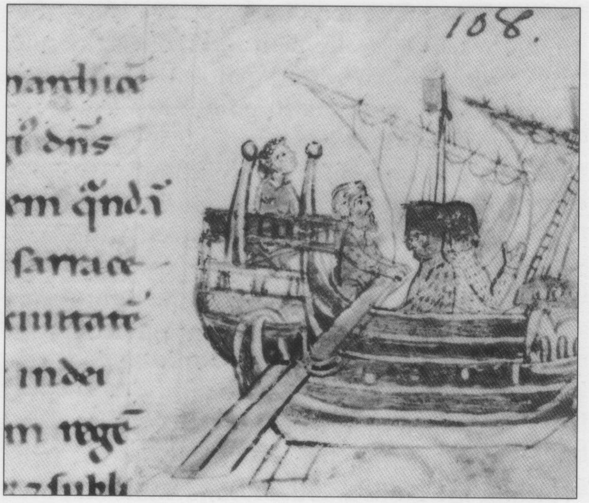
Sculpture on church facades in poor regions like the Molise was sometimes very simple; this example, illustrating the story of the knight Floovant, dates from the mid-12th century. (*in situ* Santa Maria della Strada di Matrice; photograph Ministero per i Beni e le Attivita Culturali, Campobasso)

Apart from a few large sieges, attacks on cities in the 11th and 12th centuries usually took the form of ravaging their surroundings and interrupting their trade. The 13th century then saw a dramatic increase in the effectiveness of Italian siege warfare, with crossbows playing a significant role. Meanwhile the battles, though fewer, often involved larger numbers of troops than elsewhere in Europe, while still rarely determining the outcome of a war. Inflicting damage on the enemy's economic assets remained the most important aspect of warfare in Italy. This could, of course, pose its own dangers. In the late 11th century the Emperor Henry personally led a small raiding force against the lands of the Marquis Azzo, but the latter's ally, the redoubtable Matilda of Tuscany, sent a small force of picked men under Marquis Ugo del Manso to seize the Emperor. They might have succeeded if Del Manso had not changed sides and betrayed his own men. Otherwise the struggle between Matilda and Henry consisted of the German Emperor trying to pick off the duchess' strongest castles while the duchess harassed Imperial troops whenever possible.

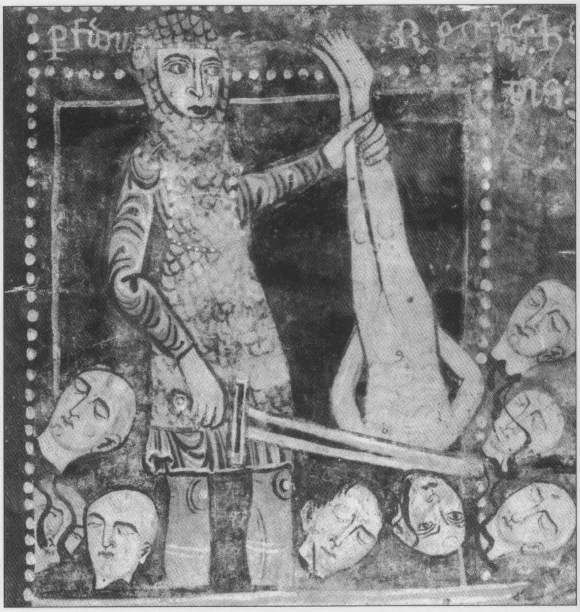
With the exception of prolonged sieges, most campaigns in 12th and 13th century Tuscany consisted of brief *gualdane* raids, usually in summer or autumn, by forces which contained ten times as many foot soldiers as cavalrymen. A major expedition by a communal militia army was called an *exercitus* while a more limited raid was called a *cavalcate.* Undertaking either required lengthy discussions by the city's Grand Council; in some ways it was war by committee.

The crossbow played a major part in the development of Italian warfare. Increasing numbers of crossbowmen not only prompted the development of more effective armour, but also led to better and more numerous fortifications to defend frontiers, major roads, river crossings and passes. Fortifications had, of course, played a more important role in early medieval Italy than in most other parts of Western Europe. Most of the wars in 10th and 11th century southern Italy consisted of sieges and most of the German Emperors' campaigns in northern Italy also aimed at the seizure of cities, even if this did not necessarily involve a siege. Yet it was in a number of major battles during such campaigns that the urban militia of northern Italy astonished contemporary Europe by their ability to withstand and even defeat the Emperor's armoured cavalry.

'Conrad of Montferrat arrives at Tyre', in a late 12th or early 13th century Genoese manuscript. The steersman wears a full mail hauberk while Conrad and another man have flat-topped helmets with nasals. (*Annales de Gènes*, Ms.Lat.10136, f.108, Bib. Nationale, Paris)



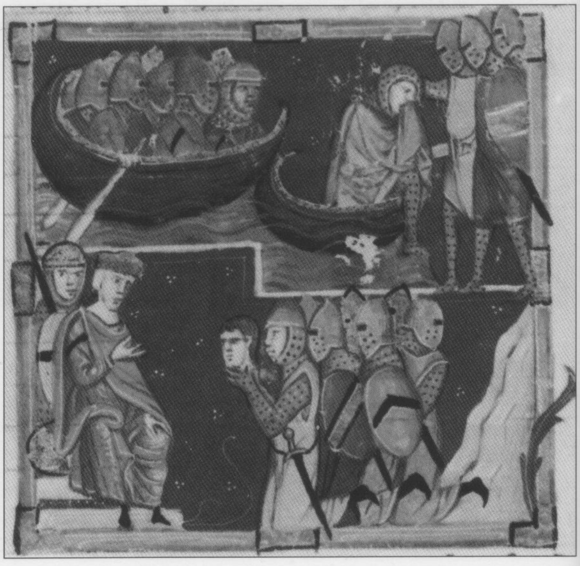
In flat and fertile Lombardy, rivers and irrigation canals were a significant factor in warfare. In hilly Tuscany circumstances were different; here expanding cities like Florence needed to control the roads for trade. Tuscany was also more forested than today, so that many agricultural zones, *contados* and cities were like islands in a sea of trees, while the roads were generally confined to valleys and relatively few mountain passes. In fact there was a so-called 'roads revolution' in several parts of Italy, with improvements to existing routes, the revival of ancient roads and the construction of entirely new ones. Many were patrolled by local militias and were dominated by castles or other fortifications. Given the extremely mountainous nature of the countryside, it was similarly important for the southern kingdoms to control frontier passes and the more limited number of roads. Here, however, there was the additional problem that the old Roman road system had virtually disappeared by the 11th century.



One of the most distinctive forms of 13th century Italian helmet appears in this manuscript made in Rome in 1233. It is essentially a close-fitting version of the great helm. (*Faits des Romains*, Bib. Royale, Ms.10168-72, f.131r, Brussels)

The feudal knights may have respected the power of the cities but they tended to despise their infantry militias – and often suffered as a consequence of this underestimation. Local and civic patriotism was extremely strong, while the discipline of urban forces enabled militia cavalry to stick with their infantry, returning to support them even after being broken up by enemy cavalry, and refraining from prematurely pursuing a retreating foe.

Throughout the 12th and most of the 13th centuries communal solidarity remained strong. Elaborate celebrations on a patron saint's feast day provided a focus for local pride, and many cities used their saint's name as a battle-cry. A crude and ferocious 'Crusade mentality' was also apparent in many Pisan and Genoese naval assaults on neighbouring Islamic territory. Muslims were, in fact, widely seen as 'the enemies of God' whose slaughter was to be encouraged. The situation was, at first, different in southern Italy. Here, after an enthusiastic involvement in the First Crusade, the Norman kingdom cultivated excellent relations with Egypt and tried not to alienate the militarily important Muslim population of Sicily. Nevertheless something approaching a Crusade mentality prompted the intolerance which new Christian settlers showed towards the existing Muslim population.



French culture and chivalric literature were followed with great interest in the courts of leading Italian barons like the Marquis of Montferrat. Even the urban élite took a great interest in such things, though sometimes tongue-in-cheek. Societies like the Fellowships of the Falcons, the Lions and the Round Table may even

OPPOSITE **Detail from a little-known early 13th century wall painting of a martyrdom scene in a church in the rather isolated Abruzzi region; it clearly shows a soldier wearing a mail coif and a hauberk without sleeves. (*In situ* church of Sta Maria Ronzano, Castel Castagna; photograph Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali-Soprintendenza per it Beni Ambientali per l'Abruzzo)**

have been encouraged, as a way of keeping troublesome young men busy with military training and knightly interests. Clear similarities between the honour codes of Christian and Muslim military élites may also have made it easier for such warriors to fight side by side in southern Italy, although King Manfred's use of Muslim troops against Christian foes in Italy handed a propaganda victory to his enemy the Pope. On the other side, the Papacy's proclamation of numerous Crusades against its own foes in Italy was distasteful to many Christians.

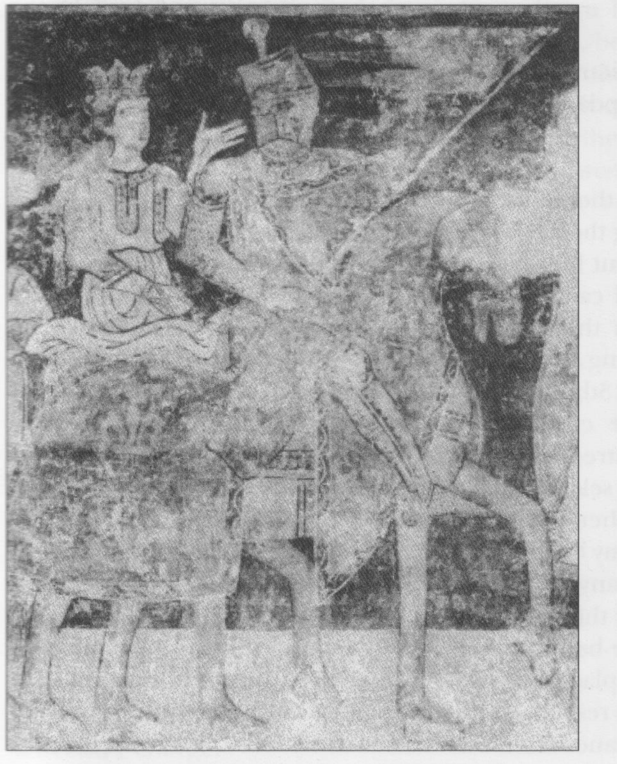
The knights of Italy often seem to have fought by the code of vendetta rather than the code of chivalry, but even the vendetta system had its own strict rules. Vengeance had to be proportionate and appropriate, and the role of governments in establishing peace between conflicting parties was accepted. This code was also followed by middle class and even humble families, and much of the violence in medieval Italian cities probably sprang from this deep-seated vendetta culture.

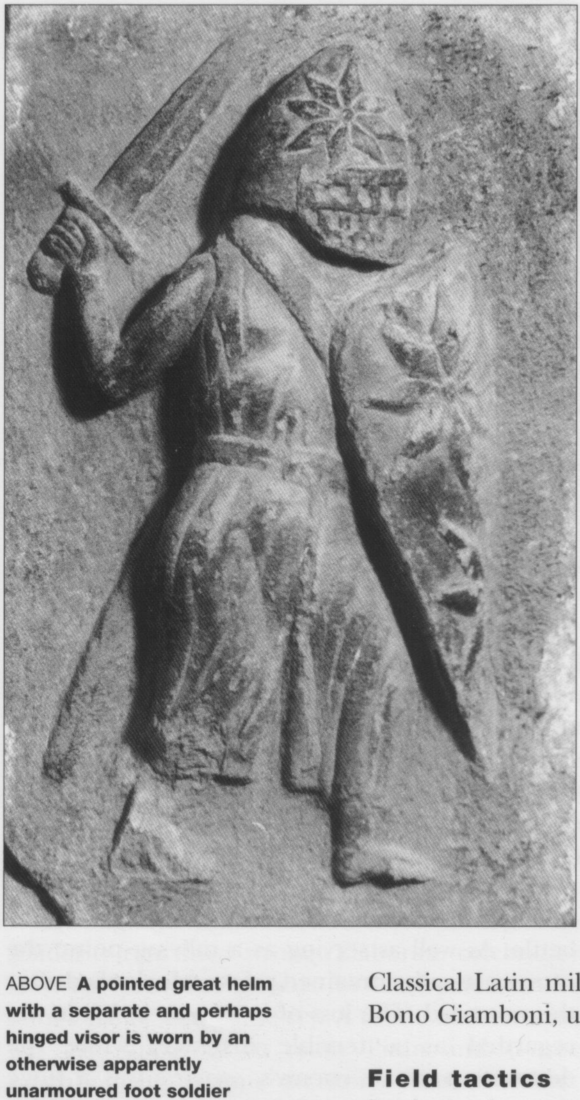
Symbolism

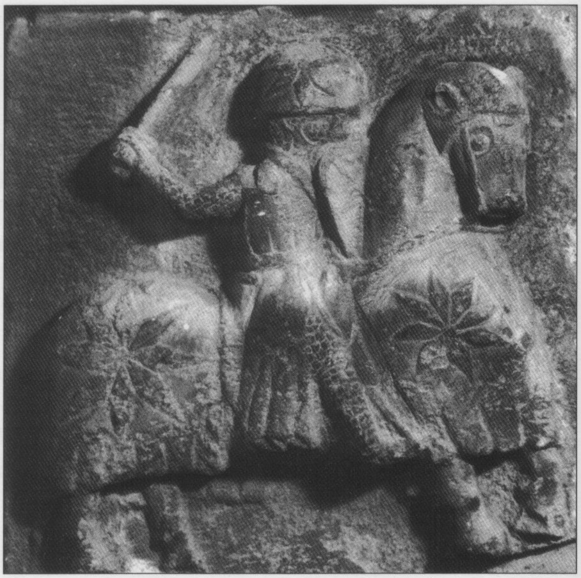
The most visible and distinctive symbol of urban patriotism was the *carroccio*: a decorated waggon, usually bearing the city's banner, which formed the centrepoint of a communal army's battle array. The first such *carroccio* was mentioned in Milan in 1039, and was described as 'a high wooden pole like the mast of a ship, which was fixed to a strong waggon. At the top was a gilded apple and from this descended two ribbons of dazzling white cloth and in the centre a Holy Cross was painted with our Saviour portrayed, his arms extended'. By the later 12th century many cities had *carroccios*, that of Parma being called *Blancardus* while that of Cremona was called *Bertha*. Parma's *carroccio* also had a wooden 'tabernacle' consisting of a red tent with a long banner where Mass was celebrated before battle. As well as serving as a rallying point, the *carroccio* usually contained priests who looked after the wounded. The loss of a *carroccio* in battle was regarded as a terrible disgrace, while the destruction of an enemy's *carroccio* was a huge propaganda victory. Some *carroccios* in 13th century Tuscany incorporated a *martinella* or bell in a wooden tower, this being a particularly important symbol for the Florentine army. Communal *carroccios* were, however, only rolled out for major campaigns.

Music and public ceremony were used to raise morale, especially when a communal army marched out of a city gate at the start of a campaign, accompanied by the ringing of church bells. It is also possible that much of the devastation wrought by an army's *guastatores* was ritual rather than real, being an attempt to humiliate a rival city as close to its walls as possible. From the second half of the 12th century onwards heraldry became a major form of communal, militia, guild and family identification as well as being a method of demonstrating political allegiance in the

The fully armoured figure on this damaged wall-painting, made before 1282, probably represents the power of Assisi. His legs are covered by mail chausses and the latest style of plated protections, probably of hardened leather. (*in situ* Palazzo del Capitano del Popolo, Assisi)







endless quarrels between Guelphs and Ghibellines. In some respects Italian heraldry differed from that seen north of the Alps, with a greater use of textual inscriptions and geometric 'fields' on heraldic shields. Another feature of the 12th century was the appearance of literature in praise of the writer's city; war-poetry was also written, especially in Genoa. Further north the city of Cremona became a centre for new technology and engineering, both military and civil. In the late 13th century a simplified version of the Classical Latin military manual by Vegetius was written in Florence by Bono Giamboni, updated and intended for contemporary use.

ABOVE **A pointed great helm with a separate and perhaps hinged visor is worn by an otherwise apparently unarmoured foot soldier on this remarkable mid-13th century relief carving. Note the heraldic decoration on both his helmet and shield. (Pinacotèca communal gallery, Sansepulcro)**

ABOVE RIGHT **The same frieze also includes fully armoured horsemen who do not wear such helms. Again, note heraldic symbols on helmet and horse caparison. (Pinacotèca communal gallery, Sansepulcro)**

Field tactics

In the early years there were references to the Prince of Benevento's army camouflaging themselves with branches so that they could get close to an enemy without being seen. Attacking an army on the march with fast-moving picked cavalry was a favoured tactic, and during the 12th century armies on the march were said to have followed the advice of Vegetius by using light infantry and light cavalry to defend their baggage. By the 13th century, however, Tuscan forces seem to have preferred to place crossbowmen at the head of their column, the *carroccio* in the centre and cavalry bringing up the rear. Sudden attacks by small forces of selected men, usually fast-moving cavalry, were also a favoured tactic when trying to raise the siege of a castle. For example, in July 1084 the army besieging Sorbara was defeated by a small force led by Matilda of Tuscany, which 'silently surrounded' the besiegers before charging, shouting their war cry of 'St Peter!'

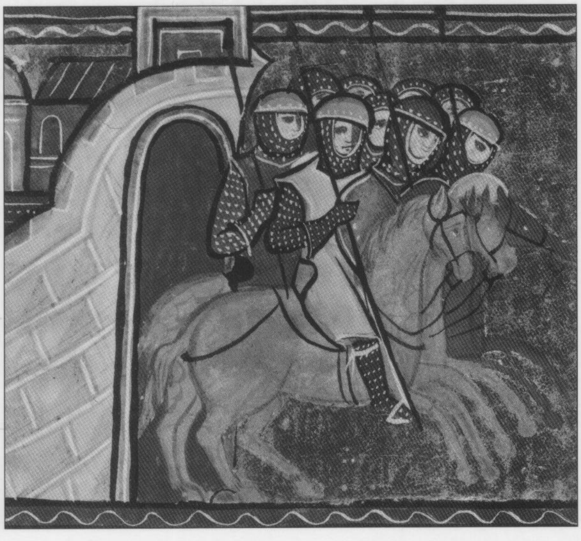
During full-scale battles in the open terrain of Lombardy, communal armies sometimes placed cavalry ahead of their infantry, sometimes on the flanks or in the rear, and sometimes divided between positions which could be some distance from the main infantry force. This happened at

Carcano in 1160, when the Milanese cavalry found themselves unable to attack the Emperor's army after the latter had forced back the Milanese infantry because of a range of steep hills in between. Sixteen years later the Emperor marched close by Milan on his way to join expected allies at Pavia, but found himself challenged by a large Milanese and allied army at Legnano. Here the Imperial force brushed aside the Milanese advance guard and broke their main force of cavalry before attacking Milanese infantry drawn up behind strong field fortifications. A prolonged struggle followed, but the Milanese cavalry regrouped and attacked the Imperial cavalry in the flank. The Imperial troops panicked and fled, while the Emperor himself had to creep away in a different direction.

During the 11th century much northern Italian communal infantry still fought in close ranks using their spears like pikes, protected by large shields and supported by a small number of archers. By the 12th century these close-packed formations, often in the form of a rectangular box, could also take the offensive, but such forward movements on the battlefield were usually against enemy infantry, while cavalry fought cavalry. Yet even in the 11th century there were occasions when infantry attacked cavalry if the latter became disorganised.

The main emphasis was on endurance and the choice of a good defensive position, while lines of communication were given careful consideration. The defence of roads and bridges was as important as that of fortified positions, and some field fortifications became semi-permanent positions. In the early days Italian archers and crossbowmen were largely used to cover spear-armed infantry as the latter took up position, then perhaps being used to defend their flanks. In the late 12th and 13th centuries this changed: the clear superiority of the 'Saracens' of Lucera as light infantry skirmishers led to attempts to develop comparable light infantry in northern Italy. Unfortunately the latter were largely armed with crossbows and, because of their slow rate of shooting, they were never as effective as the men of Lucera – whose nimbleness allowed them to take on heavily armoured cavalry in the open. For protection the crossbowmen of northern and central Italy still normally relied upon the tall, mantlet-style *pavese* shield, carried by *pavesarii* who worked with the crossbowmen as a team; this naturally prevented them achieving the agility of light infantry armed with conventional bows.

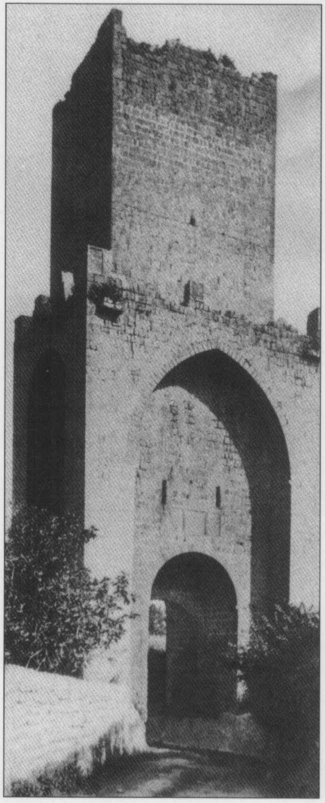
Meanwhile the majority of communal infantry also relied upon *pavese* shields and long spears called *lanzelonghe*, fighting in close-packed ranks. Consequently they could become the target for enemy crossbowmen, as when the Ghibelline leader Guido Novello used heavy crossbows to break the resistance of static infantry near Faenza in 1275. In response, a moving 'fortress' of *pavesarii* and crossbowmen could take the offensive. Although such a manoeuvre remained slow, an advance by crossbowmen and *pavesarii* at the battle of Montecatini broke the enemy's infantry line and enabled the cavalry to deliver a decisive charge.



Detail from a northern Italian manuscript dating from around 1291–95. It shows light helmets worn with full mail armour and perhaps padded surcoats, plus separate mail gauntlets. (*Conquest of Outremer*, Cod. Fr. 2631, f.21v, Bib. Nat., Paris)

At Montaperti (1260) the Florentines planned to send archers and crossbowmen forward to harass the enemy if the latter came too close, then to charge the hopefully disorganised foe with cavalry; the plan failed and Florence suffered a serious defeat. Twenty-nine years later, at the battle of Campaldino, the army of Arezzo attacked the Florentine line with cavalry and light infantry runners charging as one. The foot soldiers were armed with short swords to attack enemy horses, but in the event the charge was shot down by Florentine crossbowmen and archers on the flanks.

It was now becoming clear that the part-time amateur knights of Italian urban militias could not compete with professionals. There were also several instances in the later 13th century when militia cavalry abandoned their infantry, thus further undermining their own reputation. Light cavalry may have been rising in importance; and there were even occasions when mounted crossbowmen apparently used their weapons from horseback against static infantry. Nevertheless, the tactical role of armoured cavalry as the primary shock element in all armies remained much as it had been at the start of this period.



The Torre di San Biele in Viterbo in central Italy was erected around 1270 and forms part of a gate. (Photograph Brogli)

FORTIFICATION

Despite the long urban traditions of southern Italy, it seems that fortification in this region was more old-fashioned than in wealthy northern Italy. However, Salerno and Benevento were both walled during the Lombard era, and several newly fortified areas were actually larger than the previous Roman walled *oppidum*. Building techniques remained similar to those of the Romans, until the late 11th century when new ideas started to appear. Medieval fortresses also used the foundations of the Roman walls, sometimes incorporating massive tombs and amphitheatres.

Even in the early medieval period attempts were made to maintain the walls, towers and even aqueducts of Rome. The same was probably true of other cities, and at the same time newly established towns were also fortified. Although this was more typical of the south, the ancient north-eastern city of Aquilaeia was refortified in the early 11th century after having been abandoned for centuries. Elsewhere, however, the flourishing city of Mantua still had only a wooden palisade in 1090, while its main gates or approaches were dominated by tall towers. Almost a century later a newly established town at Alessandria still relied on earth ramparts topped by timber fortifications.

Those Italian cities which did erect stone or brick defences were usually surrounded by a simple curtain-wall with tall but widely spaced towers. During the 13th century most timber elements in medieval Italian military architecture were replaced by stone or brick, as incendiary weapons were becoming more effective. An increasing use of crossbows and of ever more powerful siege machines similarly led to a notable increase in the strength of Italian fortification.

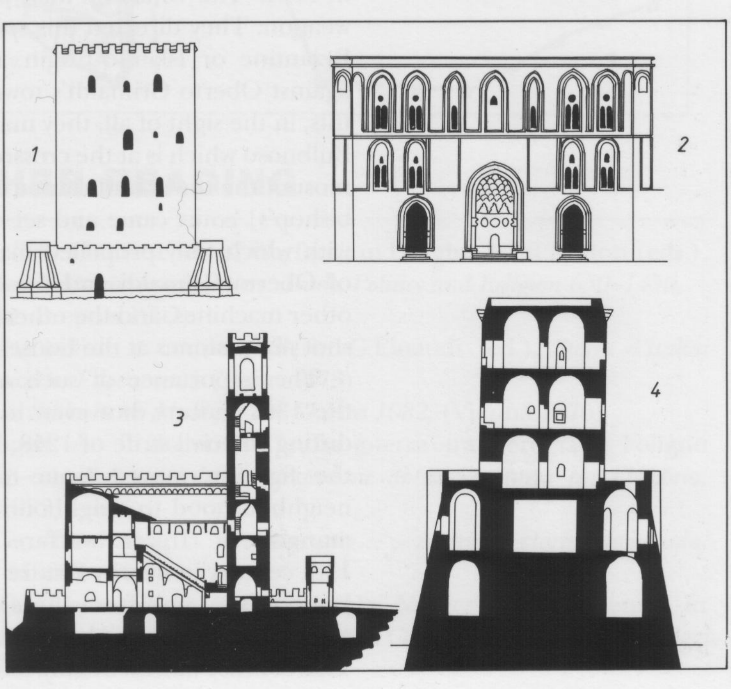
Italian rural fortifications, such as this isolated tower near Pontassieve in Tuscany, were based upon the same principles as urban fortifications. (Photograph Stefani)

A reliance on very tall towers remained a feature of Italian military architecture long after the 13th century, sometimes with elaborate overhanging machicolations. In flat Lombardy and Venezia there was considerable use of water-filled moats; for example, when Padua and Treviso threatened the Venetian fort at Bebe in 1215, a water-filled ditch was excavated around the tower. Perhaps this threatened the foundations, as a massive rope had to be tied around the main tower to enable it to withstand the enemy's stone-throwing engines.

Stories of how city walls were erected in a single night were, of course, mythical, but a city's fortifications were more than merely military. They were symbols of pride and wealth, so it was natural that gates should be decorated with carvings including propaganda texts. When threatened by Imperial troops in 1155, Genoa erected an inscription which read: 'If you come in peace you may approach these walls; if you bring war you will depart broken and defeated'.

The countryside was dotted with simple fortifications, but as most later developed into larger castles very little remains today of the earliest defences. Amongst the few early fortifications which do survive is the impressive Lombard *turris* or citadel behind Salerno. This served as a place of refuge and as a vantage point from which to observe a long stretch of coast. Archaeology shows that many of the fortified sites mentioned in 12th century documents existed a century or more earlier. Some seem to have served as refuges for the agricultural population; these various forms of *caneve* or *cellaria*, as they were known, were probably also used to safeguard stocks of agricultural produce, at a time when the devastation of an enemy's fields and orchards was a favourite form of warfare. Monasteries, being centres of agricultural production, were often similarly fortified, and it is clear that the Church not only possessed but built many fortifications from the 10th century onwards.

Barricades of timber formed the basis of the field fortifications which played a major role in Italian warfare. Sometimes such positions included stone-throwing machines. Mangonels of the man-powered variety were also used by the Emperor Barbarossa against a bridge of boats, to stop enemy pursuit following his defeat at Carcano in 1160. During the 12th century some waggons could be 'armoured' to form a mobile field fortification; these were of a light and easily moveable type, sometimes called *plaustrella*, and their use may have been a speciality of communal infantry in Lombardy. Something similar was recorded in the mid-13th century, by which time heavy waggons were apparently used to construct rapid field fortifications, at times with heavy crossbows or even small stone-throwing machines on board.



(1) Adrano Castle; the central tower was built by the Normans of Sicily c.1070 on the ruins of an Arab-Islamic fortification, while the outer wall and towers were later additions. (After Caciagli)
(2) The facade of La Zisa, a semi-fortified palace in Palermo built by the King William I in Fatimid Egyptian-Islamic style in 1154. (After A.Tuulse)
(3) The Castello of Poppi in Tuscany as it appeared in the late 13th century, with a tall tower comparable to those found in many cities. (After W.Bartolini et al)
(4) The tower-castle of Termoli, designed by Emperor Frederick II around 1247, but reconstructed after an earthquake in 1456. (After A.Tuulse)

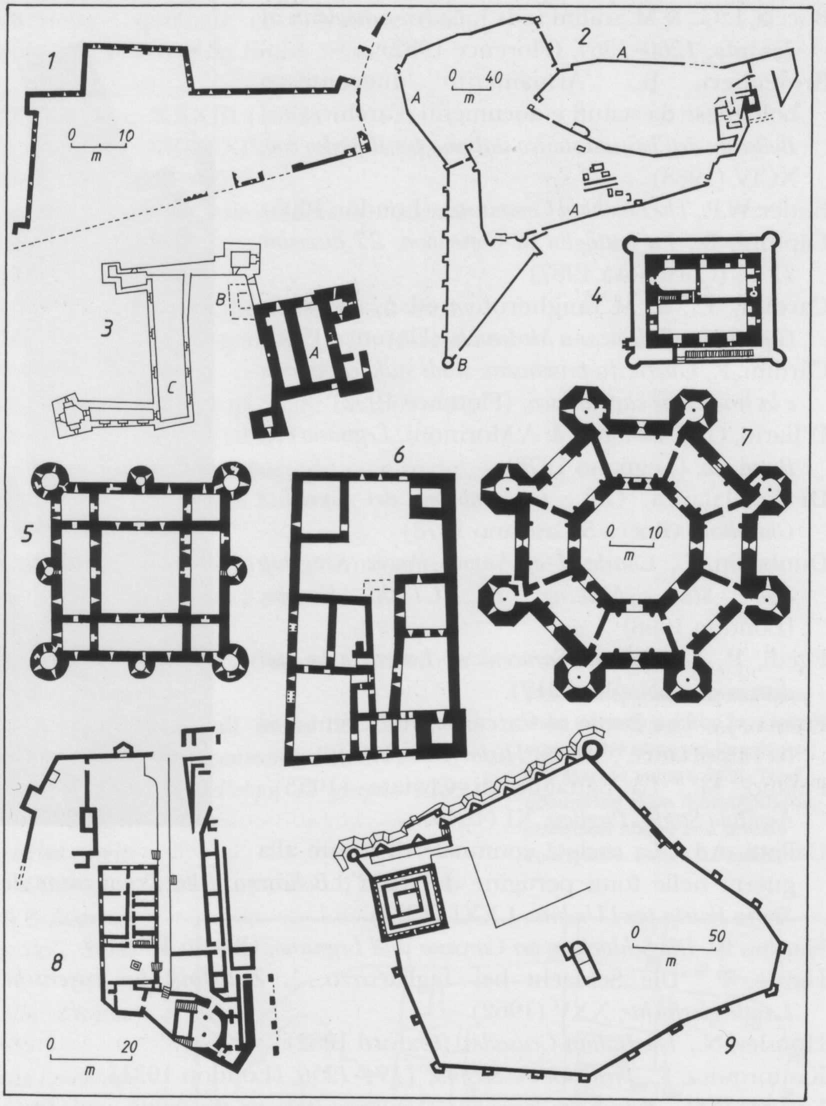
Emperor Frederick II's magnificent fortified hunting lodge of Castel del Monte, built in 1240, became a symbol of Hohenstaufen rule. It incorporates a gateway based upon ancient Roman architecture. (Author's photograph)

Siege warfare ranged from full-scale assaults on cities which were amongst the largest in western Europe, to mere skirmishing between rival towers within a city. In 11th century Rome civil war between forces supporting Pope and Emperor resulted in each side holding towers inside the city and using large churches as strongpoints. Elsewhere in the late 11th century even a major expedition led by the Emperor was unable to overcome the wooden palisade around Mantua. In complete contrast, the 12th century saw powerful and astonishingly sophisticated siege machines being used in northern Italy (see New Vanguard 58, *Medieval Siege Machines (1): Western Europe AD 585–1385*).

Even so, sieges still tended to follow a traditional pattern, starting with the devastation of the surrounding area, then the imposition of a blockade, followed by bombardment using small siege machines while larger engines were constructed on-site. If a relieving army did not appear on the scene within a certain time it was considered acceptable for the besieged to surrender. If a relieving army was defeated in battle, the besieged would again normally surrender. Sieges in the 13th century were essentially similar, though the machines and mining techniques had grown more powerful. Pots of 'Greek fire' were used by the Sienese garrison of Montefollonica in 1229; and in 1279–80 the Angevins of southern Italy sent 'Greek fire' plus two siege machines to Valone (now Vlora) on the Albanian coast for their campaign against Berat.

The seemingly minor skirmishing between rival towers within a town might also involve siege weaponry. According to a Genoese chronicler in 1194: 'The Volta and their party constructed a new and very powerful weapon. They directed this *spingard* [an early reference to a weapon of Byzantine or Islamic origin, later known as a *spingarda* or *espringal*] against Oberto Grimaldi's tower and Oberto Spinola's new tower. With this, in the sight of all, they managed to make a hole in the new tower of Bulbnoso which is at the crossroads of St Syrus. In this way they destroyed most of the tower and caused it to collapse. Then the men of the [archbishop's] court came and set up a machine in the orchard of St Syrus, with which they propelled many stones against the houses and towers of Oberto Grimaldi and the Spinola family. They later erected many other machines, and the other side also constructed many machines and shot many stones at the houses and tower of the court party'.

The importance of such *torri* declined during the second half of the 13th century, but even in Florence they formed 'points of battle' during the civil strife of 1248. Here, according to the chronicler Villani, the fighting moved from tower to tower, barricade to barricade, neighbourhood to neighbourhood, with considerable use of moveable mangonels. Tower warfare was similarly recorded in the late 13th century in nearby Pistoia: 'The Blacks had fortified the tower of Ser Jacopo's sons and from there they did much harm to Messer Ranieri's sons. And the Whites had fortified Messer De Lazzari's house... [etc]'. This conflict was eventually settled by the use of crossbows.



(1) Ruins of the 10th century Castel Paterno in central Italy. (After R.J.C.Jamieson) (2) The 10th century fortifications of deserted Castello di Mercato S.Severino (A) were strengthened several times, the final addition being a massive circular tower (B) at the end of a wall with many bastions built by the previous Hohenstaufen rulers. (After P.Natella & P.Peduto) (3) Melfi castle, built for the Normans in the mid-11th century (A), showing the lost fourth tower of the Norman keep (B) and the 13th century additions (C). (After Willemsen) (4) Plan of Adrano Castle in Sicily, the central tower of which was built around 1070. (After Caciagli) (5) Castel Ursino in Catania, Sicily, built in 1239 by the Emperor Frederick II's master-builder Lentini. (After A.Tuulse) (6) The oldest parts of the castle of Boymont in the south Tyrol date from the 13th century; it is an interesting mixture of Germanic mountain-top and Italian geometric designs. (After A.Tuulse) (7) Castel del Monte, built as a fortified hunting-lodge for Emperor Frederick II in 1240. (After A.Tuulse) (8) During the 11th century the palace-fortress at Canossa was Matilda of Tuscany's most important castle, and massive flanking towers of Syrian style were added in the 13th century. (After A.Tuulse) (9) The huge castle of Lucera was founded in 1235 and later enlarged for the Angevin King Charles; dominated by a massive triple-walled citadel of which only the foundations now remain, it was the garrison base of the famous 'Saracen' troops. (After J.E. & H.W.Kaufmann)

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***Torri* or private fortified 'tower houses' survive in several Italian cities. The three shown here in Pavia, Lombardy, give a dramatic impression of their typical height. The example on the right has been strengthened with modern steel clamps, while that on the left was still undergoing restoration. (Author's photograph)**

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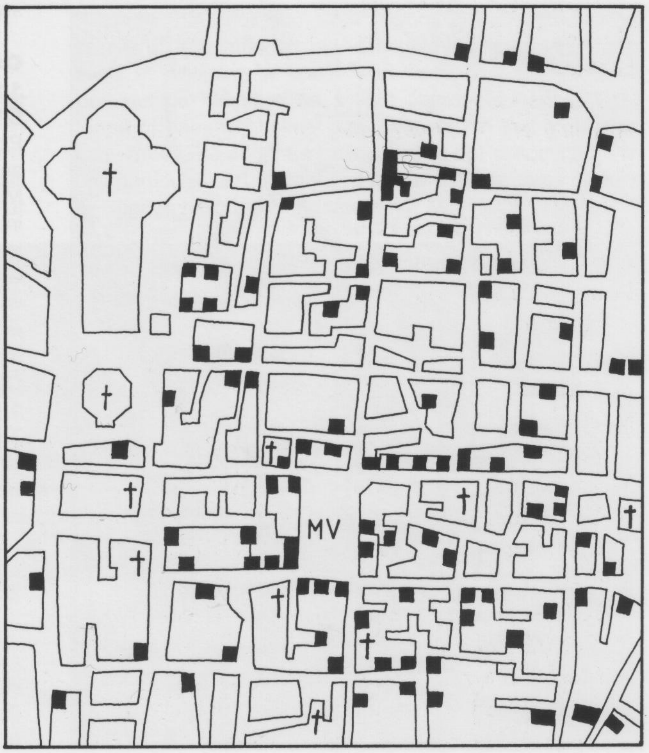
The *torri* of medieval Florence were densely packed, especially around the Mercato Vecchio or Old Market square (MV). They dominated main thoroughfares, streets of shops and private courtyards. (After G.Fanelli)



THE PLATES

A: NORTHERN ITALY, 11th CENTURY

A1: Cavalryman, mid-11th century

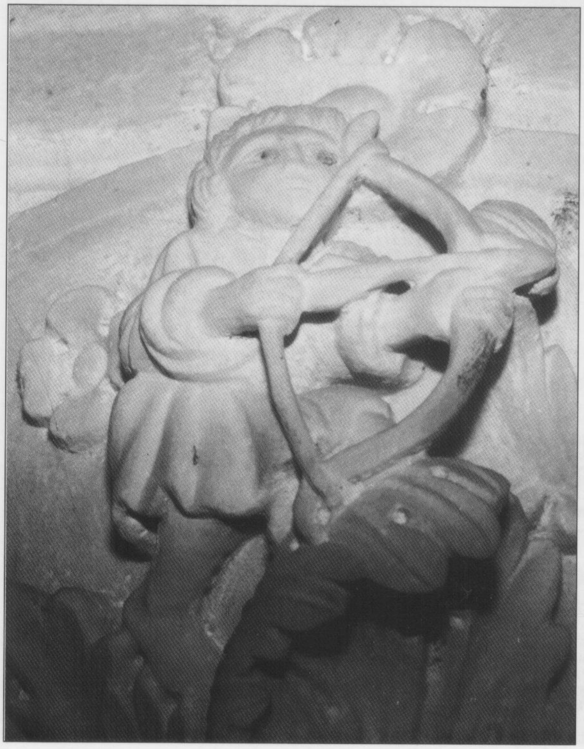
The one-piece iron helmet with an angled keel part way down its front could be seen in many parts of Western Europe, as could the broad nasal with a 'rolled up' end. However, the loose-fitting mail coif without a ventail across the chin was an old-fashioned style. In contrast the long sleeves of this hauberk are up-to-date; it is worn over a short-sleeved padded gambeson. The loose-fitting woollen cloth 'socks' were probably a Mediterranean habit. The rest of his military equipment and costume show the remarkable uniformity in fashion which was typical of 11th century Western Europe, though the decoration of his horse-harness recalls fashions seen within the Byzantine Empire.

A2: Urban militia infantryman

At this period infantrymen normally had old-fashioned military equipment, such as this man's round iron helmet formed of two halves with a broad fore-and-aft band. He is probably quite prosperous, since he owns a rather archaic mail hauberk with slits at the sides rather than front and back; the leg-protecting mail chausses again indicate that he is a member of an élite urban militia. The red and white on several pieces of equipment would probably reflect the colours of the banner of his town.

A3: Rural militiaman

In contrast to the urban militiamen, this member of a rural levy lacks both helmet and armour, though his heavy woollen cloak would offer some protection. Apart from a single-edged knife, he is armed with a primitive form of mace which was also seen in the Balkans and Middle East; this has a hollow bronze head, perhaps filled with lead.



B: PRE-NORMAN CENTRAL & SOUTHERN ITALY

B1: Southern Italian Lombard cavalryman, 11th century

The one-piece domed iron helmet with an iron browband was probably developed within the Islamic world, and southern Italy was, of course, under strong technological and stylistic influence from the Islamic and Byzantine lands. The short-sleeved mail hauberk with a thickly padded aketon beneath indicates similar connections. The height at which the scabbard is held beneath his arm agrees with instructions given in early medieval Arabic training manuals, while the single-edged sword is typical of the Eastern Mediterranean rather than Western Europe.

B2: Southern Italian infantry archer, 11th century

The soft felt hat with a long 'tail' appears in a number of southern Italian sources, and may then have survived as a local fashion shared with parts of Greece and the Balkans. The rest of his costume is typical of several Mediterranean lands, while his archery equipment reflects an infantry tradition going back to Roman times. The flights of the long arrows are attached some distance ahead of the nocks because they are designed for an archer who uses a 'finger draw' rather than the 'thumb draw'.

B3: Southern Italian nobleman, late 11th century

Aristocratic fashions in Lombard southern Italy differed from those of the rest of Europe and some aspects, such as this man's pointed hood, recall the Byzantine world, as does an abundant use of embroidered panels imported from Byzantine workshops. His cloak is wrapped round his left arm – the use of a cloak as a form of shield appears in a number of southern pictorial sources, and survived in the sword-and-stiletto fencing styles of early modern Italy.

C: NORMAN SOUTHERN ITALY, LATE 11th–12th CENTURY

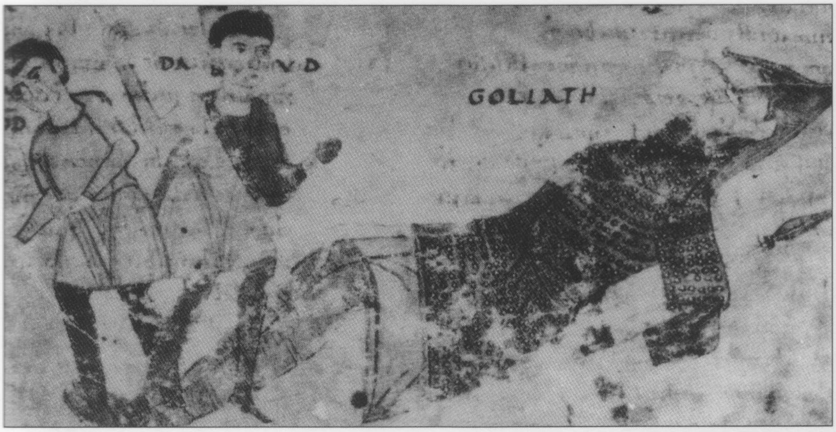
C1: Siculo-Norman knight, mid-12th century

Pointed helmets with a fluted surface appear to have been another Italian style in the 12th century and may again reflect Middle Eastern influence. The mail hauberk now has an integral coif with a mail ventail which would be laced on the left side of the head; the hem is also slit front and back, and was primarily designed for use on horseback. The hauberk is worn over a thickly quilted aketon. The kite-shaped shield is made of laminated wood with a leather-covered exterior and a plain iron boss.

C2: Southern Italian infantryman, early 12th century

This foot soldier has a thickly padded and perhaps mail-lined hood tucked into the neck of his hauberk – again probably reflecting Byzantine fashions – and the hauberk is worn over a cotton-covered aketon. The broad fabric guige of his shield is similar to those seen in both Christian and Islamic Spain; the shield has a small iron boss as an anchoring point for iron reinforcement straps. The short

A huntsman with a short bow, probably of composite construction, on a mid-11th century southern Italian carved capital – cf Plate B1. (*in situ*, Church of San Giovanni, Ravello; photograph Ian Peirce)



'David and Goliath' in an Italian manuscript made between 1110 and 1120. Goliath's mail coif incorporates a very early form of ventail which hangs across his chest in the shape of a rectangle – cf Plate D1. (*Kings I Folio*, National Gallery, Washington)

sword without quillons or guard seems to indicate North African influence, while the continued use of javelins might suggest that he is armed for service at sea.

C3: Siculo-Muslim infantryman, mid-12th century

The winding of a turban-cloth around a helmet seems to have been a means of cultural identification for Muslim warriors of Arab origin, even when serving in the army of a Christian king. The style of mail hauberk, with a leather thong to close a mail flap at the front of the neck, is also Islamic, while the multiple rows of embroidery forming *tiraz* bands around his sleeves are a fashion clearly developed in the Islamic world – here, however, only the central row has a small Arabic dedicatory inscription. The mace was a weapon that developed in response to the increasingly heavy and effective armour.

D: NORTHERN ITALIAN CAVALRY, 12th–EARLY 13th CENTURY

D1: Tuscan militia cavalryman, early 12th century

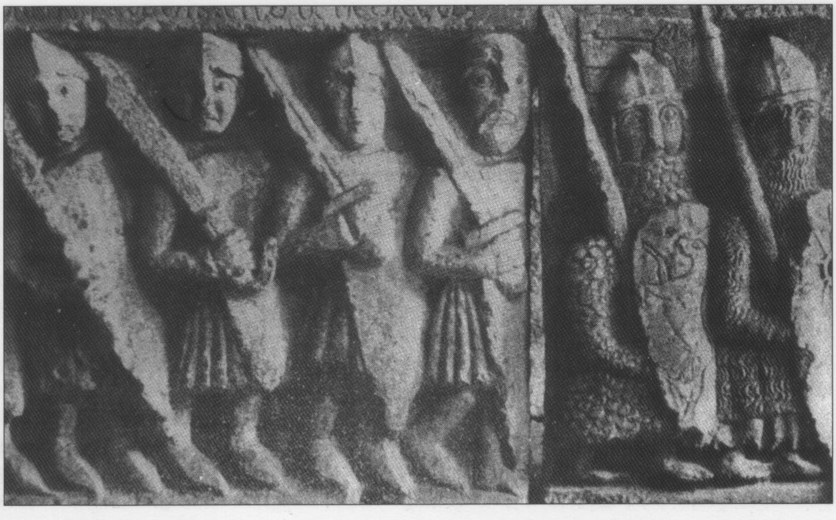
A number of variations on the basic European conical helmet appear in 12th century Italian art; this version has an iron browband and a broad nasal riveted to the rim. The short-hemmed mail hauberk also has a very early form of mail ventail which, when unlaced, falls into an almost rectangular shape; comparable ventails appear on the famous Bayeux Tapestry, though in a much cruder way. A narrow belt makes the upper part of his hauberk blouse over this belt, perhaps to shorten the hem when riding. Note that the spear is being wielded overarm, which would have been regarded as old-fashioned in most of northern Europe.

D2: Lombard cavalryman, mid-12th century

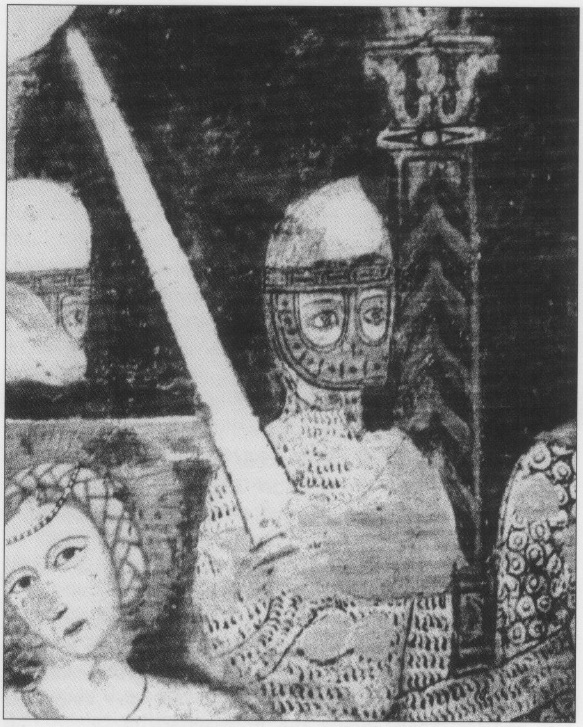
Another Italian variation on the basic one-piece conical helmet is shown here; in addition to an integral nasal and small rivets for the internal lining, it has one long and two shorter 'keels' down the front where the helmet is considerably thicker. The mail chausses over his legs and feet, as well as his gilded bronze spurs with gilded buckles, indicate that he is a wealthy man. Also note that the rounded tip of his sword indicates that it is designed only for cutting and not for thrusting.

D3: North-East Italian cavalryman, early 13th century

It seems that Friuli and other regions in the north-eastern corner of Italy retained old-fashioned methods of combat such as wielding a spear with both hands: this could perhaps be identified as a light cavalry technique. Early forms of brimmed helmet also appeared in this area at an early date. The separate mail coif was not associated with any particular part of Italy and it may have become popular in Germany around the same time. Most other aspects of



The carved relief from the Porta Romana in Milan illustrates Milanese troops returning after defeating the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and dates from around 1167. The army is headed by fully armoured men (right) and a larger number with only helmets and large shields (left). One of the latter has a massive early form of single-edged falchion – cf Plate E1; note its 'walking stick' pommel. (Castello Sforzesco Museum, Milan)



This late 12th century wall-painting of 'The Martyrdom of Thomas à Becket' includes a number of interesting military features including fixed face-masks on both pointed and round helmets. The central figure also has a mail hauberk with only one integral mitten for the right hand – cf Plate G1. (*in situ* Church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo, Spoleto)

this man's arms and armour are comparable to those seen in the rest of the country, though his horse-harness has similarities with that of the neighbouring Balkans.

E: NORTHERN ITALIAN INFANTRY DEFEND A MARTINELLA, 12th CENTURY

E1: Militia infantryman

The segmented helmet with a fore-and-aft strip forged from the same piece as the brow-band is crudely made and may have been typical of urban infantrymen; note that the broad nasal has its own lining, as indicated by four rivets. The large parchment-covered wooden shield has a fluted double-domed boss with very broad surrounding flange, plus a broad iron disc between the boss and the reinforcing bands riveted to the surface. He is armed with a large early form of falchion; this was often seen with a distinctive hooked 'walking stick' handle, perhaps because the blade was so heavy.

E2: Archer

The hardened leather helmet shown here is a hypothetical reconstruction based upon not entirely clear pictorial and sculptural sources; such protections were also used at sea. The rest of his clothing and simple equipment indicate that he is not part of the urban militia élite – in fact, archers and even crossbowmen were widely despised. The short sword with an almost triangular blade would, however, increase in popularity and in prestige in later years.

E3: Standard-bearer of Bologna

In complete contrast to the bowman, this soldier is from the well-to-do town mercantile class. His one-piece iron helmet has engraved and partially gilded decoration; note the distinctive second chinstrap passing behind the ear to the rear rim of the helmet – this is seen in a carving in Verona. Also note that the neck of his mail hauberk is pulled up high and clearly has some form of internal stiffening. The rest of his arms and armour are straightforward, except for the wearing of mail chausses on one leg only; the left leg would, of course, have been thrust forward when he was kneeling behind his large pavese shield.

E4: Martinella

This reconstruction of a *martinella* bell in a timber frame, as mounted on a waggon pulled by oxen, is based upon a reconstruction by Mario Venturi (see 'Further Reading'). The mechanism was, in fact, a simplified version of those in the bell-towers attached to almost all Italian churches.

F: NORTHERN ITALY, 13th CENTURY

F1: Cavalryman, early 13th century

Italian knights were among the first to adopt the flat-topped 'great helm', probably in response to an increased use of infantry crossbows; they are usually shown with some form of heraldic painting. The mail hauberk is again bulky around the arms and chest because of thickly quilted soft-armour beneath. Another cloth-covered, perhaps buff leather form of sleeveless soft armour is worn over this. In addition to his sword, this horseman is armed with a massive iron mace with a flanged head.

F2: Infantryman, 13th century

The close-fitting, one-piece iron *cervelleria* helmet was a new feature of the 13th century: the thickly padded mail *colleria* comes high up his neck as well as going over his shoulders, beneath a tunic which is worn over a short-sleeved mail hauberk. This is itself worn over a quilted garment, hence the whole effect is bulky. The man's basilard dagger already has the distinctive H-shaped wood-covered hilt of such weapons; and he is also armed with a large-bladed, long-hafted *guisarma* axe.

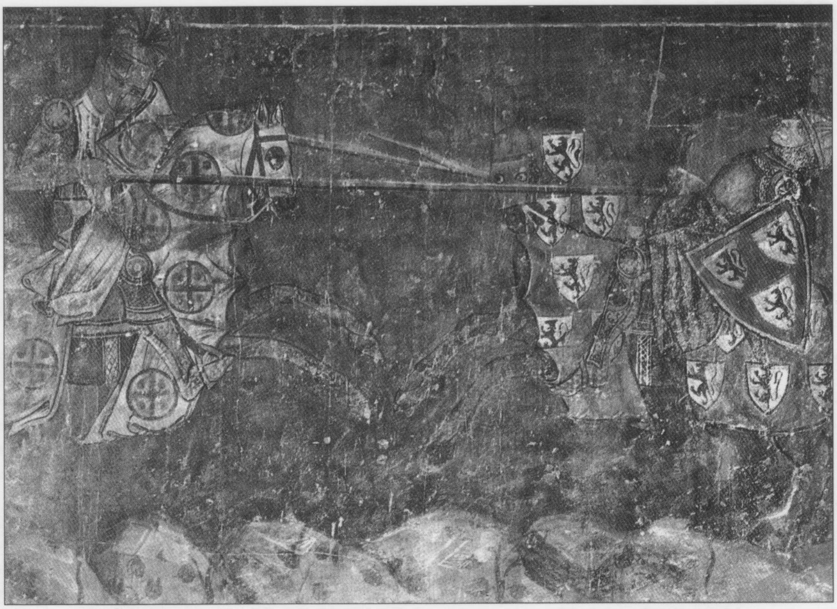
F3: Knight, late 13th century

Here a simple one-piece iron cervelleria is worn beneath a great helm and over a mail coif, which is separate from the hauberk. The surcoat has very thick padding only over the shoulders and upper chest. A fashion for embroidering a heraldic motif on the breast of the surcoat seems to have been characteristic of Italy. Another very early feature are the thickly padded, mail-covered gauntlets, which may have first been developed in Italy or the Byzantine Empire. In addition to mail chausses, his knees and thighs are protected by canvas-covered, thickly quilted cuisses. The caparison of the knight's horse covers a full mail bard.

G: CENTRAL ITALY, 13th CENTURY

G1: Tuscan knight in Papal service, early 13th century

The wearing of a close-fitting cervelleria type of helmet beneath a mail coif may be seen in Italian, French and Portuguese art from the same period. The long-sleeved mail hauberk with only one mitten does, however, seem to have been distinctively Italian, appearing in pictorial sources and being described in an early 13th century will – presumably a



The armour on wall-paintings made around 1290 in San Gimignano includes some of the earliest representations of hardened leather protection for the arms and legs – cf Plate H1. (*in situ* Sala di Dante, Museo Civico, San Gimignano)

mitten was not considered necessary for the hand holding a shield. The way in which one end of his sword-belt is split into three rather than two is based upon a pictorial source which may nevertheless have been an artist's error. The acutely pointed sword came into fashion at an early date in southern Italy, and may have reflected new fencing styles from the East.

G2: Tuscan knight of the Alighieri family, late 13th century

The one-piece iron helmet with a bulging crown and narrow brim is based upon a carving in Florence which is regarded as one of the most important sources of information for late 13th century Italian armour. The long-sleeved, short-hemmed mail hauberk is again worn over a quilted gambeson, although the integral mail gloves now have separate fingers. The upper part of the body of the surcoat is lined with scales or plates secured by gilded rivets, whose heads are disguised beneath embroidered *fleurs-de-lys*. Another new and distinctively Italian form of equipment is the hardened leather leg armour, consisting of three sections for the thighs, knees and shins. The leather sabatons or armoured shoes have gilded rivet heads to secure an inner layer of scales.

G3: Militia crossbowman, Volterra, mid-13th century

The coif worn by this man is shown in a damaged state to expose an inner layer of mail. His other protection consists of a quilted outer garment and a short-sleeved, short-hemmed mail shirt. The shield-shaped white patch on the left breast of this soft armour bears the arms of Volterra, which are probably painted rather than embroidered. The leather belt around his waist takes the strain of spanning a powerful crossbow. The narrower belt is for his quiver and knife.

H: HOHENSTAUFEN & ANGEVIN SOUTHERN ITALY, LATE 12th–13th CENTURIES

H1: Southern Italian knight, late 13th century

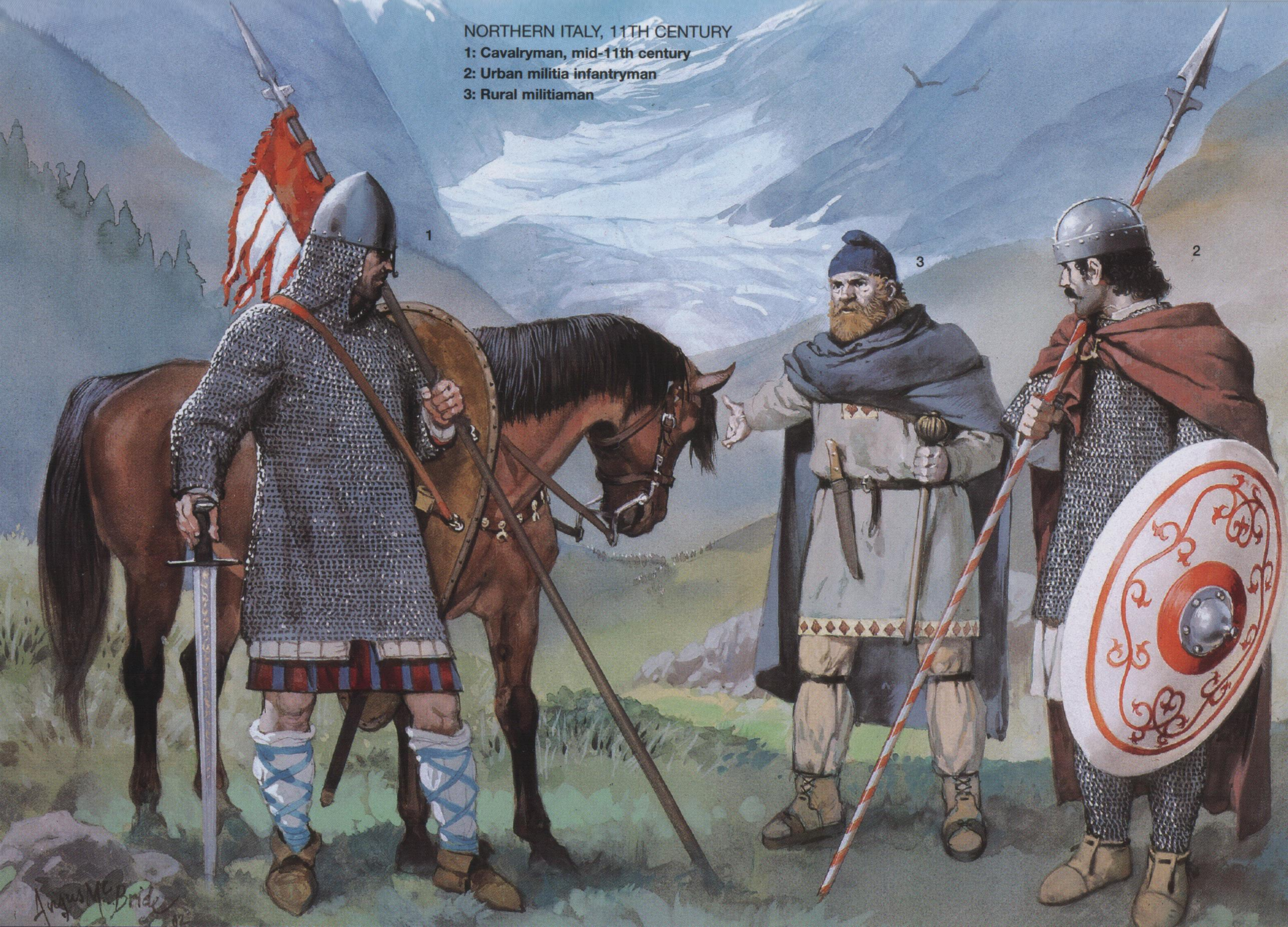
This knight wears an early form of one-piece iron bascinet with gilded rivets to secure its lining; another large rivet holds one half of a pinned hinge to which a visor could be attached. The rest of his armour consists of a thickly padded mail coif or aventail, a long-sleeved mail hauberk, a partially quilted surcoat, hardened leather upper arm protections and domed elbow pieces, and thickly quilted, partially mail-covered gauntlets with remarkably long cuffs. His legs are protected by quilted cuisses over thighs and knees, domed iron poleyns over the knees, hardened leather greaves and iron discs on the outsides of the knees only. His weapons are a small sword for use on foot and a rondel dagger (obscured here). The leather-covered laminated wooden shield is painted with the embossed arms of the Angevin rulers of southern Italy.

H2: Southern Italian light infantryman, early 13th century

This man is wearing peasant costume of the period and place, consisting of a light woollen tunic with semi-stiff cuffs of heavier fabric or soft leather, beneath a heavy smock secured down both sides by loops and wooden toggles. In addition to a heavy wooden club he carries a leather-covered wooden buckler and a large single-edged knife. His most distinctive weapon is, however, a primitive staff-sling – this was still used in siege and naval warfare.

H3: Muslim guardsman from Lucera, mid-13th century

In contrast to the previous figure, this Muslim guardsman is a member of a military élite, despite his legal status as a virtual slave to the king. Though clinging to their Muslim faith, the troops based in and around Lucera were now cut off from the rest of the Islamic world and their military equipment was made locally. This man wears a European cervelleria helmet beneath a turban-cloth which, like some other aspects of his costume, was intended to identify him as a 'Saracen'. His mail *gorgeria* covers neck, throat and shoulders. The thick, semi-stiff quilted *giubetta* is a form of soft armour which again originated in the Islamic world, but was now an accepted piece of Italian military equipment. On the other hand his archery equipment and bow of composite construction were essentially 'Saracen'.



NORTHERN ITALY, 11TH CENTURY

1: Cavalryman, mid-11th century

2: Urban militia infantryman

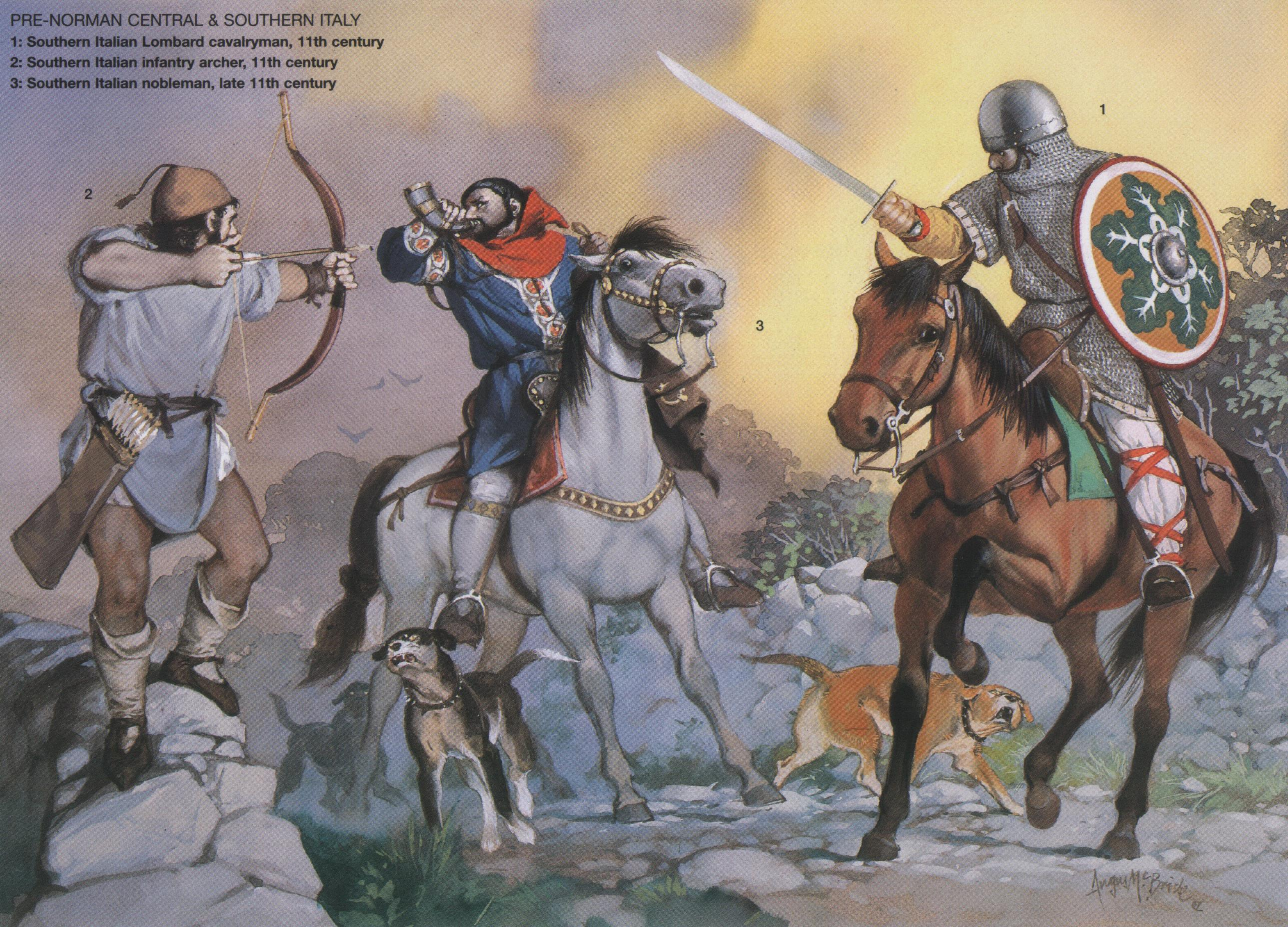
3: Rural militiaman

PRE-NORMAN CENTRAL & SOUTHERN ITALY

1: Southern Italian Lombard cavalryman, 11th century

2: Southern Italian infantry archer, 11th century

3: Southern Italian nobleman, late 11th century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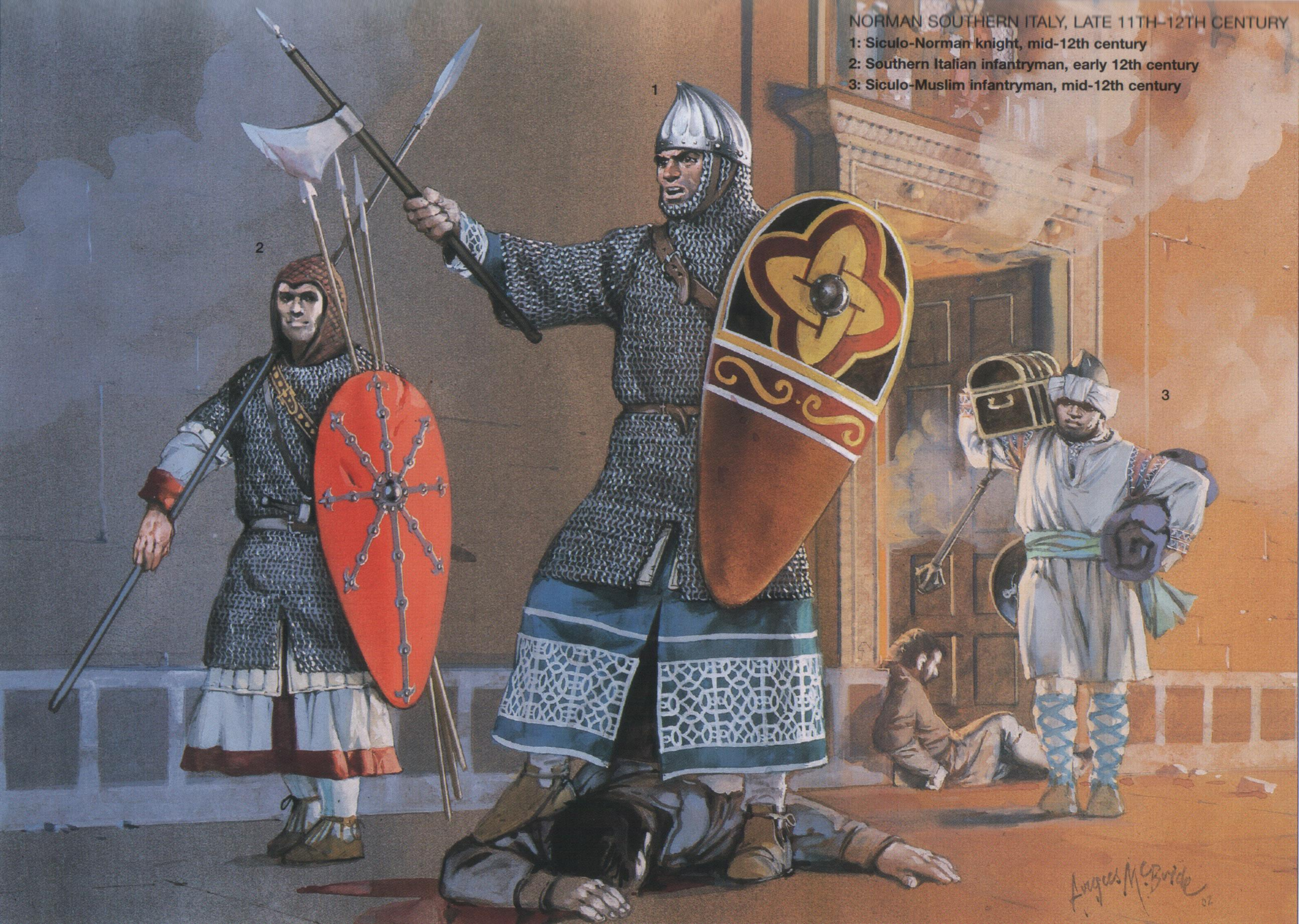
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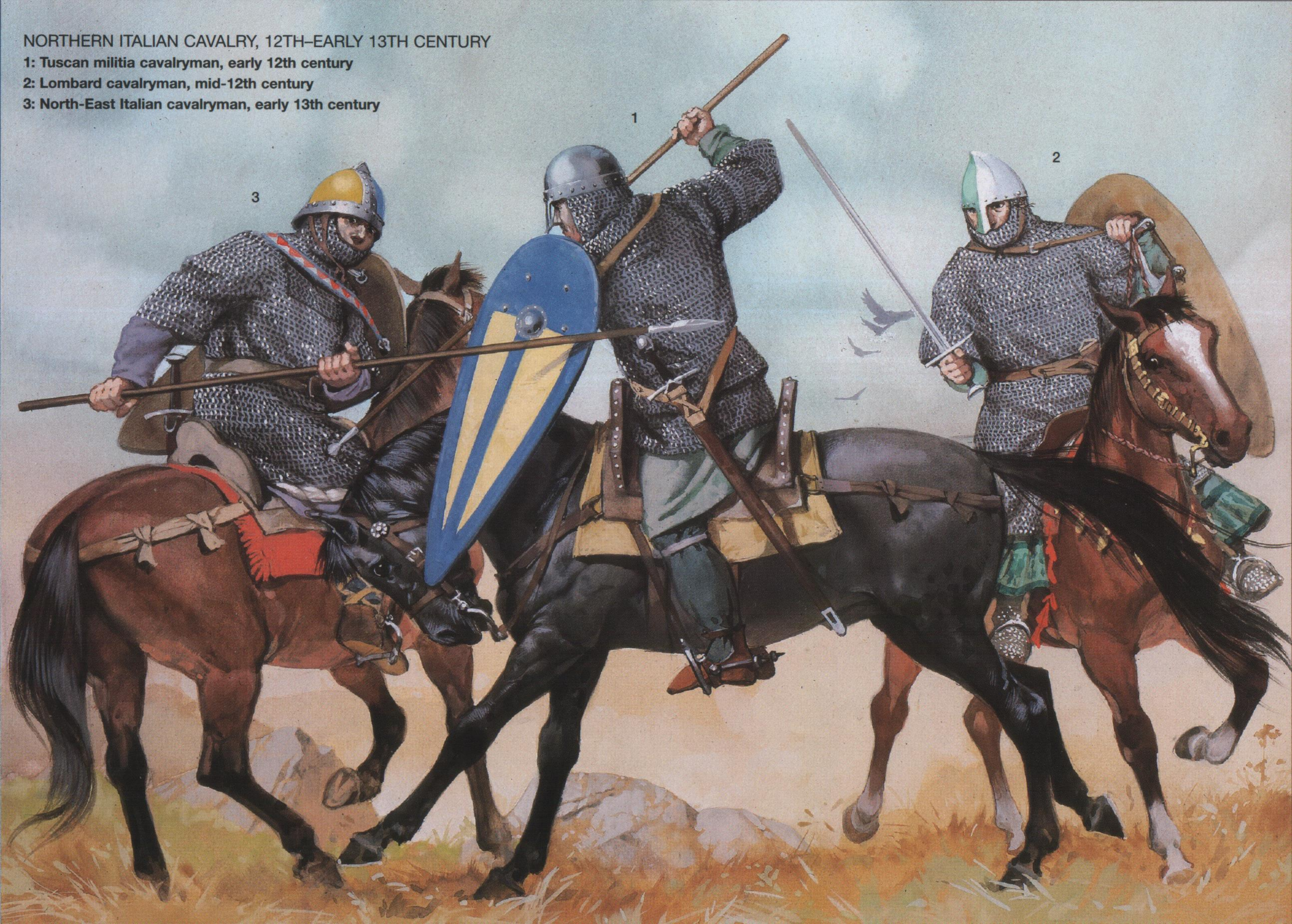
NORMAN SOUTHERN ITALY, LATE 11TH–12TH CENTURY

1: Siculo-Norman knight, mid-12th century
2: Southern Italian infantryman, early 12th century
3: Siculo-Muslim infantryman, mid-12th century

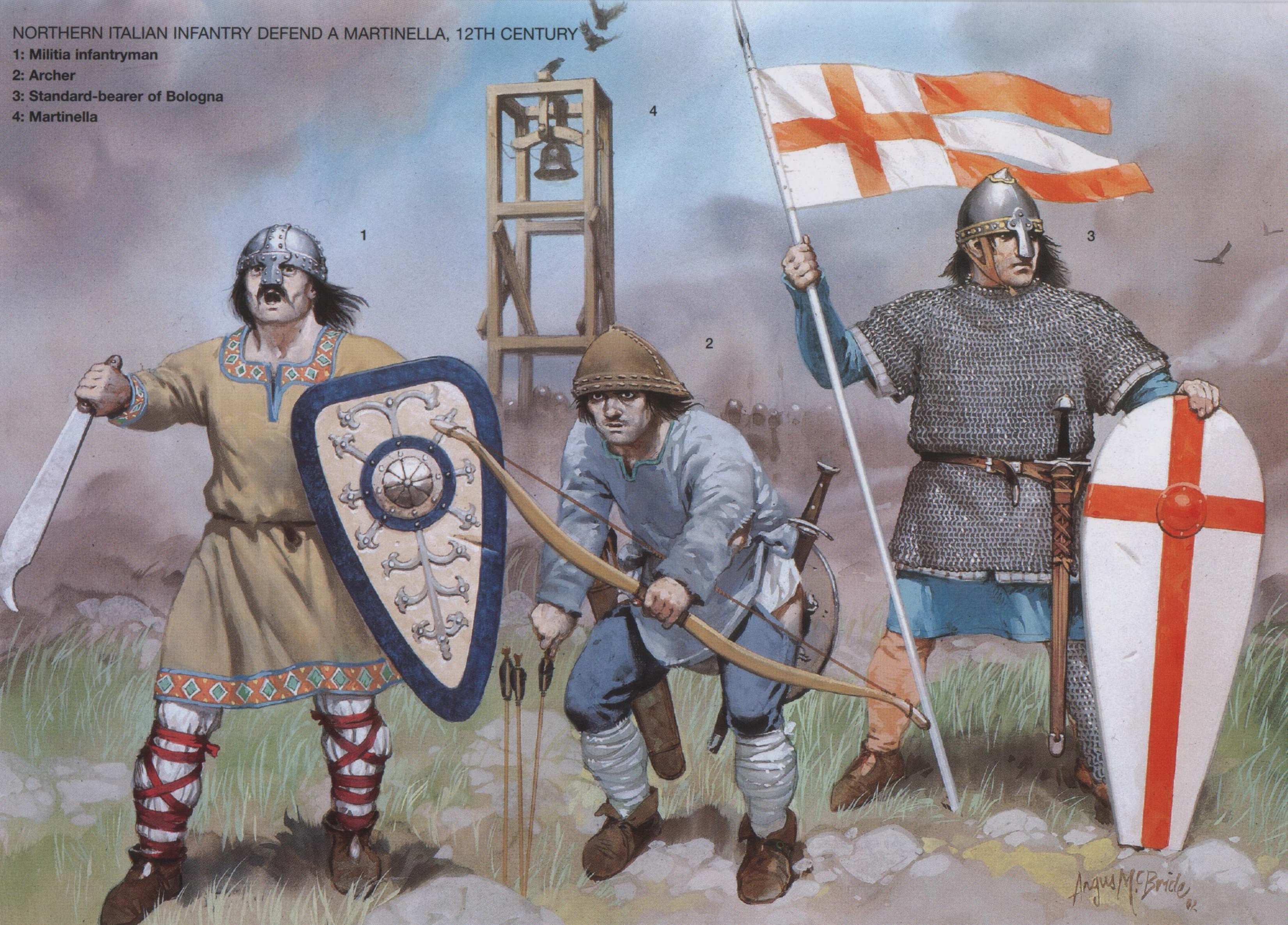


NORTHERN ITALIAN CAVALRY, 12TH–EARLY 13TH CENTURY

1: Tuscan militia cavalryman, early 12th century

2: Lombard cavalryman, mid-12th century

3: North-East Italian cavalryman, early 13th century



NORTHERN ITALIAN INFANTRY DEFEND A MARTINELLA, 12TH CENTURY

1: Militia infantryman

2: Archer

3: Standard-bearer of Bologna

4: Martinella

4
1
2
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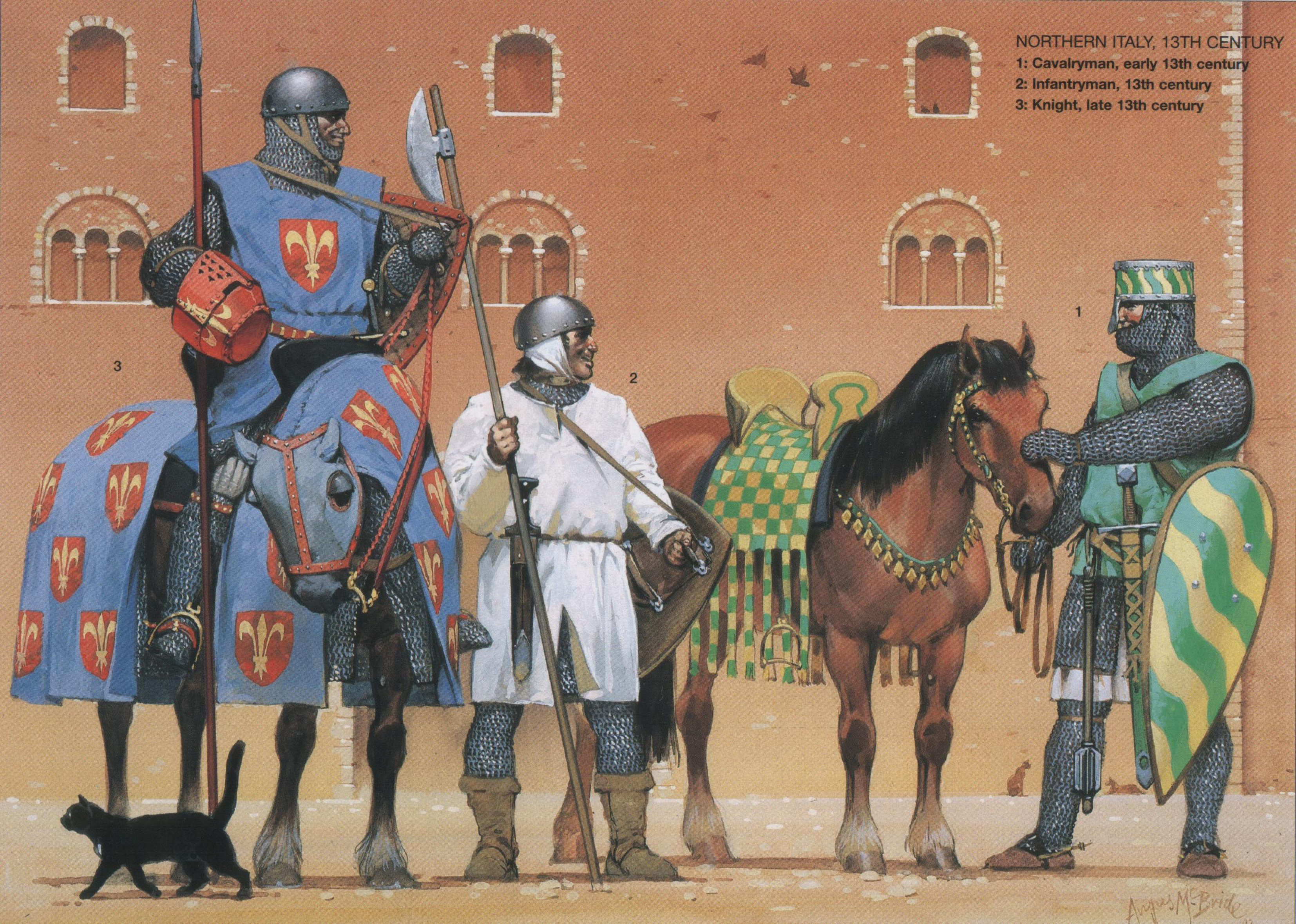
Angus McBride
02



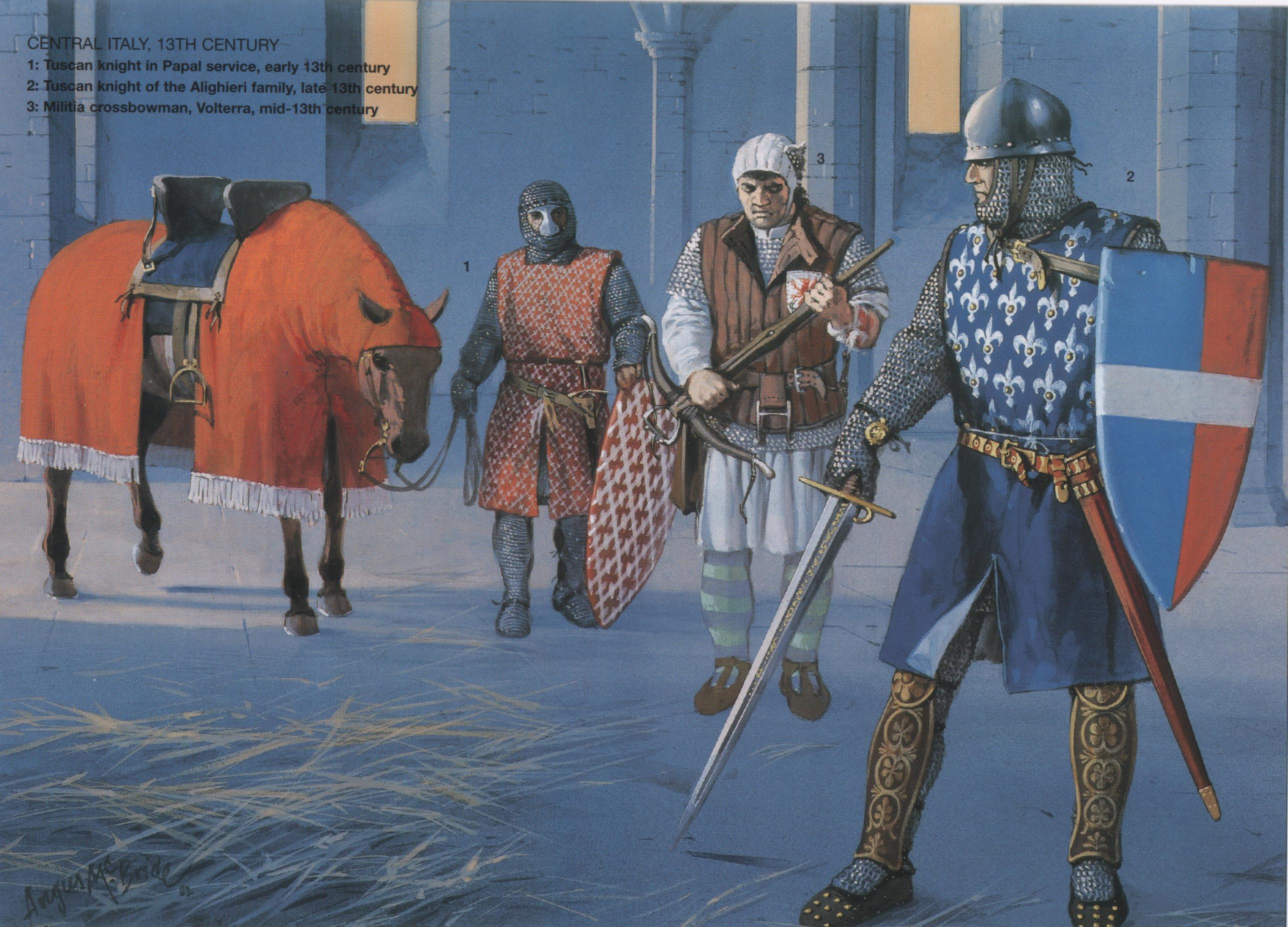
NORTHERN ITALY, 13TH CENTURY

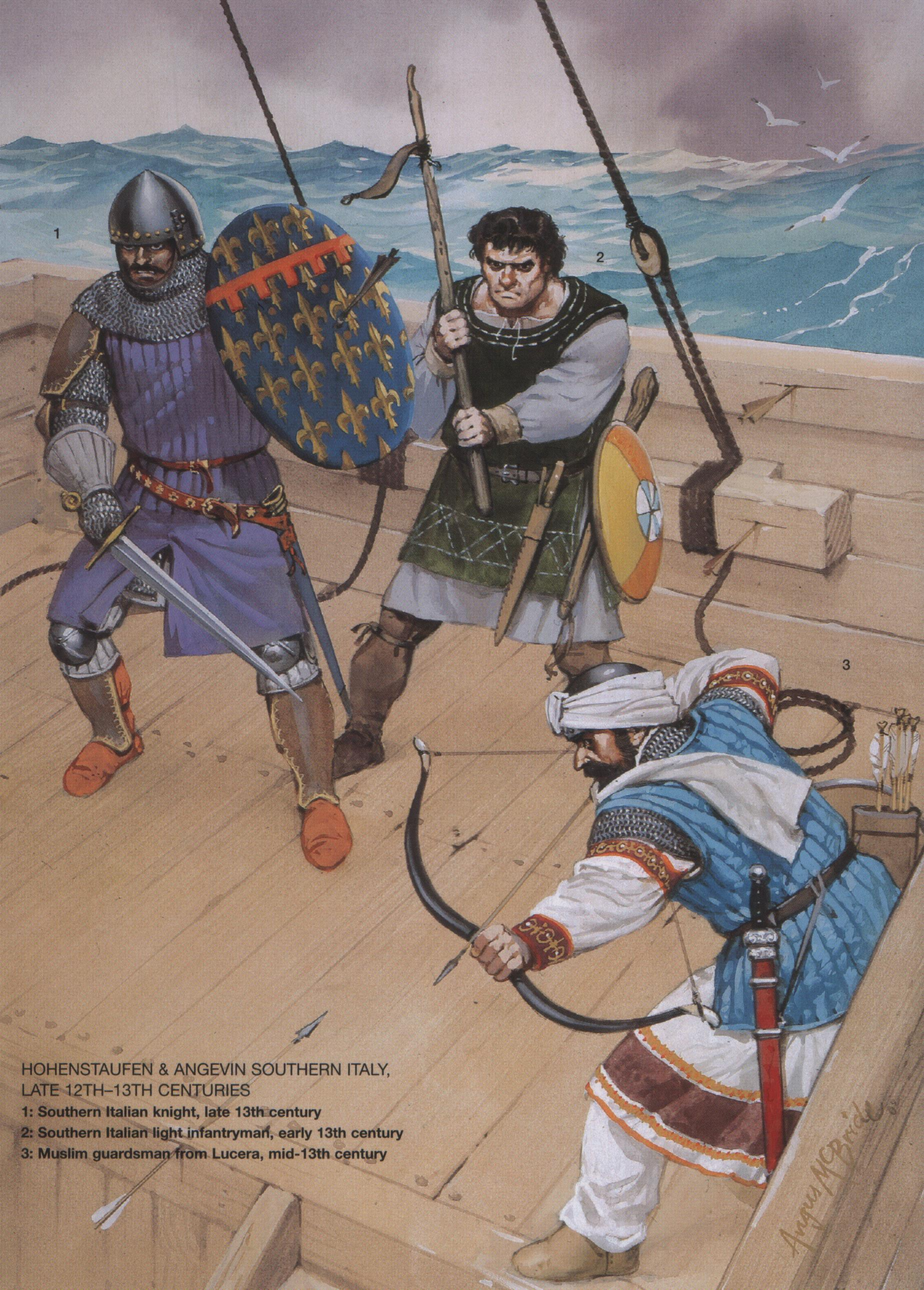
1: Cavalryman, early 13th century
2: Infantryman, 13th century
3: Knight, late 13th century

1
2
3
Angus McBride

CENTRAL ITALY, 13TH CENTURY

1: Tuscan knight in Papal service, early 13th century
2: Tuscan knight of the Alighieri family, late 13th century
3: Militia crossbowman, Volterra, mid-13th century





HOHENSTAUFEN & ANGEVIN SOUTHERN ITALY, LATE 12TH–13TH CENTURIES

1: Southern Italian knight, late 13th century
2: Southern Italian light infantryman, early 13th century
3: Muslim guardsman from Lucera, mid-13th century